

# THE NATURE OF MORAL VALUATION

A Study in Contemporary Ethics with special reference to  
G. E. Moore, John Dewey and C. L. Stevenson

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## CERTIFICATE

This dissertation, entitled "The Nature of Moral Valuation: A Study in Contemporary Ethics with special reference to G.E. Moore, John Dewey and C.L. Stevenson" is the work of Mr. Vimalendu Narayan Sinha, under my supervision.

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For all the errors, that may remain, only I am responsible

V.N.S.

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## SYNOPSIS

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The Nature of Moral Valuation

A Study in Contemporary Ethics with special reference to  
G.E. Moore, John Dewey and C.L. Stevenson

The present work aims at the study and examination of some dominant theories of moral valuation with a view to explicate its nature. In this connection some other related problems have also been studied. I have discussed primarily the theories of Moore, Dewey and Stevenson, although the views of some other thinkers have also been referred to. The thinkers, mentioned above, have been selected because they represent three dominant schools of contemporary ethics viz., Intuitionism, Instrumentalism and Emotivism respectively.

The work consists of six chapters. In the first chapter an effort is made to explain the difference between the logical behaviour of descriptive and evaluative expressions. In this connection the views of Moore, Dewey, Stevenson and R.M. Hare have been discussed. Here my conclusion is that the difference between these expressions consists in the action-guiding function of evaluative expressions, which is not the characteristic function of descriptive expressions.

The second chapter deals with the problem of distinguishing a moral valuation from a non-moral one. Here the views of Dewey, Stevenson and R.M.Hare have been discussed and examined. I do not find any logical difference between moral and non-moral evaluations, however they can be distinguished on the basis of the object of their evaluation.

In the third chapter I have studied the nature of the judgment of intrinsic value. Here, again, the views of Moore, Dewey and Stevenson have been discussed. My conclusion is that the distinction between intrinsic and instrumental value is not absolute. It only exhibits the focus of attention of the evaluator at the time of evaluation. If an evaluator pays attention to the object only and neglects its consequences then his judgment is a judgment of intrinsic value. But, if he takes into account the object along with its consequences, then his judgment is the judgment of instrumental value.

In the fourth chapter an inquiry into the nature of moral arguments has been undertaken. Here, both the deductive and the inductive approaches to moral reasoning have been rejected. My conclusion, here, is that moral arguments form a class of their own.

The problem of the cognition of value comes up in the fifth chapter. Here it has been shown that the question of the method of cognising value has a significance only in the context of a particular theory, i.e. one according to which

value is a property very different from other properties. Once this theory is rejected the problem ceases to be a problem.

In the sixth chapter the question concerning the relationship between value- and obligation-expressions has been discussed. In this connection the views of Moore and Dewey have been discussed. The theory that 'right' and 'duty' can be defined in terms of 'good' has been rejected here. My conclusion is that although the ideas of 'right' and 'duty' are distinct, yet they are not unrelated with the idea of 'the good'.



## INTRODUCTION

The present work intends to discuss and examine some of the important theories of moral valuation in order to ascertain its nature. It also proposes to discuss some other general problems, which arise in the study of moral as well as non-moral valuation. It will be mainly concerned with the ethical theories of G.E. Moore, John Dewey and C.L. Stevenson, though references to the views of some others will also be made. The above mentioned thinkers have been selected because they represent three dominant schools of contemporary ethics, viz., Intuitionism, Instrumentalism and Emotivism, respectively.

The work is divided into six chapters. In the first an attempt has been made to explain the difference between the logical behaviour of descriptive and evaluative expressions. Here the methods adopted by Moore, Dewey, Stevenson and R.M. Hare have been discussed.

In the second chapter I have tried to locate the features which distinguish moral valuation from non-moral one. Moore has not discussed this problem in any systematic manner, and I have shown that on his view there is actually no such distinction. The theory of Dewey that moral and non-moral values



differ in kind, the proposal of Stevenson that moral and non-moral evaluations can be distinguished on the basis of the kind of feelings and attitudes which are associated with them, and Hare's contention that a distinction between moral and non-moral valuation could be made on the basis of the class in which the evaluative comparison is made have also been discussed and examined.

The third chapter deals with the nature of the judgment of intrinsic value. Here the views of Moore, Dewey and Stevenson have been studied. In the fourth chapter an analysis of the nature of moral arguments has been attempted. The nature of reasoning in general and that of deductive and inductive arguments in particular have been analysed. An attempt has been made to ascertain whether moral reasoning could be placed in either of the two, or it makes a class of its own.

In the fifth chapter the question 'How is value known?' is raised, and a discussion and examination of the intuitionist position, as represented by Moore, is presented. The positions of Dewey and Stevenson are also discussed.

The sixth chapter deals with the relationship between obligation and value-expressions. Here I have tried to find out whether or not obligation expressions are definable in terms of value expressions, or vice-versa. If the definition of obligation-expressions in terms of value-expressions or of value-expressions in terms of obligation-expressions be not

possible, then it becomes important to ascertain if the two types of expressions are at all related to each other, and if so, in what manner.

## CHAPTER I

### DESCRIPTION AND EVALUATION

Describing and evaluating are two of the most important functions which we use language to perform in our everyday life. No man of average intelligence finds difficulty in understanding what he is asked to do when he is told to describe a thing first and then to give his own evaluation of it. Ordinarily, he does not find any difficulty in distinguishing a descriptive expression from an evaluative one when such expressions are presented before him in their proper contexts. When one says, for example, about Mr. X, that 'He has blue-eyes, gray hair and white complexion', we say he is describing the look of Mr. X. But when he adds that 'Mr. X is a kind, benevolent, and fearless person', or that 'He is a good man', we have no difficulty in understanding that he has stopped describing Mr. X and has begun expressing his evaluation of him.

In contemporary value-studies this distinction between descriptive and evaluative expressions is generally accepted and emphasized. It is also usually agreed that the logical behaviour of evaluative expressions is different from that of descriptive ones. But there is a lot of disagreement among

value-theorists about the method of characterizing the difference between the two kinds of expressions and about the nature of the relation which exists between them. Here I shall accept without questioning that descriptive and evaluative expressions differ in their logical behaviour and shall discuss some important methods of accounting for this difference.

### Moore: Method of Denotational Analysis

G.E. Moore, in order to explain this difference uses, what Dr. Rajendra Prasad calls<sup>1</sup>, the Method of Denotational Analysis. Moore maintains a distinction between the judgment of 'intrinsic value' and the judgment of 'value-as-means'<sup>2</sup>. He also maintains that a judgment of value-as-means is actually a judgment about causal relationships. It simply states that the object of valuation is a cause of or is a necessary condition of another object which has intrinsic value. Thus it expresses its evaluation only as a means which is in effect a statement that it is causally related with some intrinsically good object. Hence in Moore's scheme a value-judgment, in the proper sense of the term, is a judgment of intrinsic value, and what we call a judgment of instrumental value is a causal judgment conjoin with a judgment of intrinsic value.

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1. 'Evaluative, Factual and Referring Expressions', in The Visva-Bharati Journal of Philosophy, Vol. V, No. 1, 1968, p. 73

2. Principia Ethica (Cambridge: At the University Press, First Paper-back edition 1959), p. 21

Moore takes note of the grammatical fact that evaluative expressions such as 'good', 'bad', 'right', 'wrong' etc. are adjectives. Out of these evaluative words he picks up 'good', as the key concept. He points out that 'good' is used as a predicate of different kinds of things, as is the case with several descriptive expressions like 'yellow'. Grammar does not make any distinction between 'yellow' and 'good'. From these facts Moore infers that 'good' must also denote some property (or properties) as 'yellow' does. He holds that 'Ethics is undoubtedly concerned with the question what good conduct is; but, ... all conduct is not good; for some is certainly bad and some may be indifferent. And on the other hand, other things, besides conduct, may be good; and if they are so, then 'good' denotes some property, that is common to them and conduct, ....'<sup>3</sup> So, it is to be noted that this denoting character which it shares with descriptive adjectives is not just accidental. It is clear from the fact that whenever we judge a thing to be good we have invariably some property or properties which the object shares with other good things. It is because of this property (or properties) that we judge it to be good.

It would not be out of place here to distinguish Moore's position on the denoting character of words with those of some other thinkers. According to Moore the denoting character of 'good', becomes clear from the fact that so many things

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3. Ibid., p.2



besides conduct are good and not all conduct is judged to be good. Hence Moore concludes that there must be some property which is common to all things which are judged to be good and that it must be absent in all other things which are not good. That property which is present in all good things and absent in all other things which are not good, Moore says, must be the property of goodness, which the word 'good' denotes. Hence for Moore to judge a conduct to be good is to assert that it has the property goodness. But his position will have to be kept different from thinkers<sup>4</sup> who say that value-words are denoting in character, for whenever we judge a thing to be good we have in mind some property or properties of the thing, but assert that

the fact that when we evaluate a thing we evaluate it as possessing or because of its possessing, a certain property or properties and the value-term used refers to, or its use hinges upon, some and not all of its properties (or on any one of them indiscriminately). It often happens that the use of a value-term has to be with-drawn when it is found that the thing in question does not possess a certain property or set of properties.<sup>5</sup>

These thinkers will call a thing good because it possesses a certain property or set of properties. For them a word will have the denoting character if its use hinges upon some property or a set of properties. But Moore will not call a word denoting unless it denotes a property i.e., for the words 'good' and 'yellow' being denoting words must denote 'goodness' or 'yellowness', respectively.

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4. Rajendra Prasad, 'Evaluative Factual and Referring Expressions' in The Vigva-Bharati Journal of Philosophy, Vol. V, No. 1, 1968, p. 74.

The other important point of difference between Moore and these thinkers, especially, Prasad, is that Prasad will call a word denoting even if it does not denote one particular property in all the different contexts of its use. Prasad says that

Even a word like 'red' does not in all its uses refer to the same shade of the kind of colour it is said to refer to. The fact that almost every expression, which can be used as a referring expression, can be used to refer to different things in different contexts, is responsible for the ambiguity in referring language.<sup>6</sup>

But Moore will not call a word denoting unless it denotes one single property in all the contexts of its use. For Moore to say that 'good' denotes the property goodness means that 'good' will denote this property in all contexts of its use.

In spite of these differences, Moore is right in emphasising that value expressions share the denoting character with descriptive words. But, he seems to be misled by this finding in thinking that since an expression denotes something, its meaning is what it denotes. This conception of meaning has been so thoroughly examined and so convincingly disposed off by Wittgenstein in his Philosophical Investigations that I shall not dwell upon this point any more and shall proceed to follow Moore in his quest for the property which is said to distinguish 'good' from descriptive predicates.

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6. Ibid., p. 75

Now, since 'good' is a denoting word like some descriptive words, and since denoting is a relation between a word and a thing or property, when Moore is faced with the problem of locating the distinguishing feature between the two he rightly draws his attention towards the examination of the properties denoted by these expressions.

The method which Moore adopts for finding out the distinguishing feature between 'yellow' and 'good' intails that the object or property denoted by the former must be different in nature from every object or property denoted by the latter. Hence Moore thinks that since what a descriptive expression denotes is cognised through introspection or external observation, the objects or properties denoted by 'good' must be different from the objects or properties known through these modes of cognition. Since, what 'yellow' denotes is known by sense experience (Visual perception), what 'good' denotes must be different from the properties known in this way. So, the one difference which Moore points out between an evaluative and a descriptive expression is that the mode of knowing what is denoted by the former is different from the mode of knowing what is denoted by the latter. Since the objects or properties denoted by descriptive expressions are cognised through introspection or external observation, the objects or properties denoted by value-expressions have to be known by a third mode of cognition, viz., intuition.



Moore, then, points out another differentiating characteristic in the nature of the objects or properties. He says that all the objects or properties denoted by descriptive expressions are natural while those denoted by 'good' are non-natural.

The efficacy of the method of denotational analysis in distinguishing descriptive expressions from evaluative ones has been questioned on several scores. Many people have questioned the very claim that there exists a mode of cognition which is different from both introspection and observation and thus have rejected the possibility of making a distinction between these expressions as the basis of the difference in the mode of cognising the objects denoted by these expressions. Some others have denied the competence of intuition to acquaint us with value properties.

Most of the critics have questioned the competence of this method in locating the difference of these expressions by questioning intuitionism on one score or another. But Prasad has exposed the weakness of this method in distinguishing these two types of expressions more convincingly, in his paper referred to above. On his view even if we assume both the existence of intuition as an independent mode of cognition and its ability to acquaint us with things which are denoted by value-expressions, a theory, like Moore's, which is constructed by combining these two claims, fails in explaining the difference between evaluative and descriptive expressions. He says

that this theory rather exhibits that the difference between evaluative and descriptive expressions is like the difference between one descriptive expression and another, e.g., 'yellow' and 'pleasure'. Thus distinction in term of the mode of cognition loses its significance. The fact that what 'good' denotes is known through intuition and what 'yellow' denotes is known through observation — visual perception — and what 'pleasure' denotes is known through introspection, simply succeeds in showing that 'good' is as unlike 'yellow' as 'yellow' is unlike 'pleasure'.

Perhaps Moore became conscious of the weakness of this method by the time he came to write 'The Conception of Intrinsic Value' and so tried to explain the difference between a value-expression and a descriptive one in another way. Hence, while explaining the difference between a value property and a non-value one, in this paper, he does not mention that the former is non-natural in nature where as the latter is natural. He is, rather, found groping in some other direction for locating the distinguishing feature of these properties. He says,

I can only vaguely express the kind of difference I feel there to be by saying that intrinsic properties seem to describe the intrinsic nature of what possesses them in a sense in which predicates of value never do. If you could enumerate all the intrinsic properties a given thing possessed, you would have given a complete description of it and would not need to mention any predicates of value it possessed, where as no description of a given thing could be complete which omitted any intrinsic property.'

But he immediately realises the difficulty in distinguishing a value property from a descriptive one. He believes that an intrinsic value depends completely on the intrinsic nature of the object which possesses it. So he hastens to add that

owing to the fact that predicates of intrinsic value are not themselves intrinsic properties, you cannot define 'intrinsic property' in the way which at first sight seems obviously the right one. You cannot say that an intrinsic property is a property such that if one thing possesses it and another does not, the intrinsic nature of the two things must be different. For this is the very thing which we are maintaining to be true of predicates of intrinsic value, while at the same time we say that they are not intrinsic properties... . And it seems to me possible that this is the true explanation. But, if so, it obviously adds to the difficulty of explaining the meaning of the unconditional 'must', since in this case there would be two different meanings of 'must', both unconditional, and yet neither, apparently identical with the logical 'must'.<sup>8</sup>

Here two things are to be noted. By this time Moore has started realising, though vaguely, that the distinguishing feature of these expressions has to be located in their function and not in the nature of the object they denote. In spite of his inability to find the distinguishing feature of these expressions, he is convinced about the correctness of his insight that there are two different types of expressions, hence a value expression cannot fully be defined in terms of any descriptive expression(s).

It is interesting to find that in his 'A Reply to My Critics' in The Philosophy of G.E. Moore (edited by P. A. Schilpp), he seems to be half-inclined to accept an emotive

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8. Ibid., pp. 274-275.

view, as advocated by Stevenson. When two persons disagree on moral matters, he writes,

I feel some inclination to think that those men are not making incompatible assertions: that their disagreement is merely a disagreement in attitude, like that between the man who says 'Let's play poker' and the other who says 'No, let's listen to a record:' and I do not know that I am not as much inclined to think this as to think that they are making incompatible assertions. But I certainly have some inclination to think that my old view was true and they are making incompatible assertions.'<sup>9</sup>

Thus Moore seems to realise that the distinguishing feature of an evaluative expression is its emotive function. But his loyalty to his old commitments prevents him from accepting this view whole heartedly. However he seems to be convinced of the weakness of the method of denotational analysis, which he used in his Principia Ethica, and so he did not use it in his later writings. In fact its weakness had become apparent to many others, with the result that none of the important thinkers, like Dewey, Stevenson, Hare etc., used this method in their writings.

#### Dewey: Method of Functional Analysis

Dewey also seems to make a distinction between descriptive and evaluative expressions on the basis of the functions they perform. He records that descriptive expressions are used to inform about facts, something already in existence. Value-expressions, on the other hand, are used to assert that the

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9. 'A Reply to My Critics' in The Philosophy of G.E. Moore, (Evanston and Chicago: Northwestern University, 1942) pp. 546-47.



object to which they are predicated satisfies or fulfills certain specifiable conditions. They make predictions. In support of this view he draws our attention to the use of some expressions and reports that

to say that something is enjoyed is to make a statement about a fact, something already in existence; it is not to judge the value of that fact. There is no difference between such a proposition and one which says something is sweet or sour, red or black... . But to call an object a value is to assert that it satisfies or fulfills certain conditions... . To say that something satisfies is to report something as an isolated finality. To assert that it is satisfactory is to define it in its connections and interactions... . To declare something satisfactory is to assert that it meets specifiable conditions. It is, in effect, a judgment that the thing 'will do'. It involves a prediction; it contemplates a future in which the thing will continue to serve; it will do. It asserts a consequence the thing will actively institute; it will do.<sup>10</sup>

Dewey says; 'To find a thing good is, I repeat, to attribute or to impute nothing to it. It is just to do something to it. But to consider whether it is good and how good it is, is to ask how it, as if acted upon, will operate in promoting a course of action.'<sup>11</sup> Evaluating an object for Dewey is taking into consideration the causal efficacy of the object and its consequences, and judging how its use is going to affect a certain course of action. Hence to make an evaluative judgment is not to make a statement about any fact — anything which is already existent,—but is an assertion about how the object will operate in promoting a certain course of action, or in other words, what consequences the object is going to produce

10. The Quest for Certainty (New York: G.P. Putnam's sons, 1960) pp. 260-61.

11. Essays in Experimental Logic (New York: Dover Publications, Inc. p. 359.

in the future. Judging the value of a thing is judging it in its living continuum and not to report about it in its isolated finality.

But is there no difference between a prediction and an evaluation? To predict simply means telling before hand or in advance what is going to happen. It is true that evaluative expressions also tell us in advance what consequences the object of evaluation is likely to produce. But is that all that an evaluative judgment does? An evaluative judgment not only asserts what consequences the object of evaluation is going to produce but also how those consequences are going to affect a 'course of action'. To predict a solar eclipse or a storm is only to foretell an event. This does not tell us as to how it is going to affect any course of action. But to judge a thing to be good is not simply to assert what consequences it is going to produce but also to assert that it is going to affect the contemplated course of action favourably.

Hence, the question: Is the predictive character of an evaluative judgment sufficient to distinguish it from a descriptive expression? has to be answered in the negative. For, as we have seen, to predict a storm or to predict a solar eclipse, is certainly not to evaluate. Hence, even if it is accepted that all evaluative judgments are predictive, it cannot be said that all predictive judgments are evaluative. Under this situation, Stevenson interprets Dewey to 'refer to a special

kind of prediction'<sup>12</sup> so that a distinction can be made between descriptive and evaluative expressions while accepting the predictive character of evaluative expressions. Stevenson summarises Dewey's views in the following way:

An evaluative judgment is one which makes predictions that are quite heterogeneous in their subject matter, but which have in common a particular intimate bearing on people's attitudes to the object that is evaluated. In other words, a value-judgment will differ from a scientific one only with regard to the selection and classification of the consequences predicted.... . An evaluative term cuts across these scientific classifications, and selects out consequences that may have little else in common than the effect which a knowledge of them will have in redirecting or intensifying approval.<sup>13</sup>

But Stevenson is not right in interpreting Dewey's views in this way. He forgets that in appraisal Dewey is in favour of taking into consideration all the possible consequences of the object of appraisal and then judging how those consequences would affect a certain course of action. Dewey does not make a distinction between the prediction of the consequences of an object for scientific purpose and that for the purpose of its evaluation. His concern while predicting consequences is not to see whether those predicted consequences affect one's approval of it or not, but to find out what effect it will have on a certain course of action. Dewey does not make any distinction between the nature of predictions which are made by evaluative judgments and the judgments of science. Dewey clearly asserts that 'whatever I

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12. Ethics and Language (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1945, reprinted 1958) p. 254.

13. Ibid. pp. 254-55.

have said about "will be", or of a "predictive sort," is of the same kind as what I have said, in connection with evaluations, about what has been and what is now going on;...<sup>14</sup> Hence we will have to look for some other characteristic which may serve as the basis of the distinction.

In his 'The Quest for Certainty' Dewey contrasts 'advised' with 'advisable', 'admired' with 'admirable' 'esteemed' with 'estimable' 'desired' with 'desirable', etc. He says that in each pair the first expression tends 'to make a statement about a fact' or to give 'a mere report', whereas the second is used to make a 'judgment as to the importance and need of bringing a fact into existence; or, if it is already there, of sustaining it in existence. The latter is a genuine practical judgment, and makes the only type of judgment that has to do with the direction of action .... the distinction be acknowledged as the key to understanding the relation of values to the direction of conduct...<sup>15</sup> Here we find a characteristic of value-judgment, namely its action-guiding function, in terms of which Dewey seems to be distinguishing descriptive from evaluative expressions. Emphasising the action-guiding function as a peculiar feature of value-expressions, Dewey says that 'propositions about what is or has been liked... make no claims; they put forth no demand upon subsequent attitudes and acts; they profess no authority to direct. If one likes a thing he likes it; that is a point about which

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14. 'Ethical Subject Matter and Language' in The Journal of Philosophy, Vol. XLII year 1945, p. 711.

15. The Quest for Certainty (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1960) p. 261.



there can be no dispute... . A judgment about what is to be desired and enjoyed is, on the other hand, a claim on future action; it possesses de jure and not merely de facto quality.'<sup>16</sup>

### Stevenson: Method of Dispositional Analysis

Stevenson takes the clue from Moore and tries to account for the difference between these expressions on the basis of the difference in their meaning function. He answers the question, 'What distinguishes ethical statements from scientific ones?' by saying that 'Ethical statements have a meaning that is approximately, and in part, imperative. This imperative meaning...helps to indicate how normative ethics can be distinguished from psychology and natural sciences.'<sup>17</sup> Here he uses 'ethics' in a broad sense 'letting it include all the issues in which there is a serious questioning of aims or conduct.'<sup>18</sup>

He is conscious of the difference in the functioning of an imperative and an ethical judgment. An imperative is often used to exert unilateral influence. When a man gives direct orders, he may not take a dissenting reply kindly. But

ethical judgments alter attitudes, not by an appeal to self-conscious efforts (as is the case with imperatives) but by a more flexible mechanism of suggestion. Emotive terms present the subject of which they are predicated in a bright or dim light, so to speak, and thereby lead people, rather than command them, to alter their attitudes. And they readily permit a mutual influence of this sort, as distinct from a unilateral one.<sup>19</sup>

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16. Ibid., pp.262-263.

17. Ethics and Language (New Haven: Yale University Press 1945, reprinted 1958), p. 26

18. Ibid., p. 16.

19. Ibid., p. 33.

Hence Stevenson modifies his statement and says that the distinguishing feature of an evaluative expression is its quasi-imperative function. He concedes that like a descriptive expression, a value expression also has a cognitive function, but it is attended by ambiguity and vagueness.

Stevenson works out in detail how a value expression performs a quasi-imperative function through its 'emotive' meaning. He presents a method of dispositional analysis of meaning of signs for explicating the difference between their 'descriptive' and 'emotive' meanings. According to his theory of meaning, meaning is a disposition of signs or expressions. He says that 'the meaning of a sign must be defined in terms of the psychological reactions of those who use the sign.'<sup>20</sup> He calls these psychological processes the psychological correlates of signs. He, then, asserts that the disposition of an expression to arouse a psychological reaction in its users is identical with its meaning. To quote him:

A sign's disposition to affect a hearer is to be called a 'meaning' (for the not unconventional sense in question) only if it has been caused by, and would not have developed without, an elaborate process of conditioning which has attended the sign's use in communication.'<sup>21</sup>

With the addition of the proviso Stevenson has devised a method of keeping the meaning of linguistic signs separate from that of non-linguistic ones. He is conscious that this definition

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20. Ibid. p. 42.

21. Ibid. p. 57.

of meaning is only from the point of view of a hearer. But he says that a reader can also be accommodated by only 'recognising that meaning is a disposition whose stimulus must be specified disjunctively as either reading or hearing the sign.'<sup>22</sup> A complexity creeps in his analysis of the meaning disposition of expressions when he considers the speaker's or writer's point of view. He suggests that if we accept that expressions have some 'passive' disposition -- a disposition to be used -- then we can easily accommodate the speaker's and the writer's side in the definition of 'meaning'. 'If there is a correlation between some range of a person's psychological processes and his use of a sign, we may say, granted that other factors can be classified as attendant circumstances and basis, that a sign has a disposition to be used. This disposition will be a part of the 'meaning' of the sign, granted the proviso introduced just above.'<sup>23</sup> Thus the psychological processes which are aroused in the hearer or in the reader, and are responses from their points of view become stimuli from the point of view of the speaker or the writer. He, therefore, concludes that meaning of an expression is a conjunction of dispositions, passive and not-passive. But he prefers to call this conjunction of dispositions as 'one' disposition.

Now, as Stevenson claims that all linguistic expressions have dispositions which have their mental correlates

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22. *Ibid.*, p. 57.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 57.

either as their stimuli or their responses, he is left with no option but to examine the nature of these psychological correlates of dispositions of expressions, when he is faced with the problem of accounting for the difference between descriptive and evaluative expressions. On examination of the nature of the mental processes which are the correlates of the dispositions of linguistic signs, he reports that these mental processes are of two types. He calls the one type 'a range of emotions',<sup>24</sup> and the other 'cognitive mental processes',<sup>25</sup>. He elaborates what he wants to signify by these two epithets. While explaining the epithet 'a range of emotion' he replaces 'emotion' by 'feeling and attitude'. He, then, says that 'feeling', here, 'is to be taken as designating an affective state that reveals its full nature to immediate introspection, without the use of induction.'<sup>26</sup> He accepts that an attitude is much more complicated than feeling. An attitude is itself a conjunction of dispositional properties and is carved by stimuli and responses which relate to hindering or assisting what is called the 'object' of the attitude. A precise definition of 'attitude', says Stevenson, is difficult to be presented here; so this expression should be understood from its current usage, and from the usages of other terms, such as 'desire', 'wishes', 'disapproval' etc., which name specific attitudes.

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24. Ibid., p. 59.

25. Ibid., p. 62.

26. Ibid., p. 60.



While explaining what he means by the expression 'cognitive mental processes' he says that the term 'cognitive' in this expression is to be taken as 'a general term designating such specific kinds of mental activity as believing, thinking, supposing, presuming, and so on'.<sup>27</sup> He warns people against the temptation of identifying a 'cognitive reaction' with a 'flat piece of experience' which reveals its full nature to introspection if it is directed to it at the time of its occurrence. He also rejects the alternative of identifying it with imagery as Hume did. He expresses his dissatisfaction with the views of those who consider it as an unique experience with an indefinable 'self-transcendence', because indefinables put an end to further analysis. In his opinion such a view should be accepted only as the last resort. He concedes that there are some feelings which are peculiar to cognition such as the feeling of tension which comes from 'expecting something to happen', but they do not tell us what this 'self-transcendence' could be. He is in favour of supplementing a purely introspective definition of 'cognition' with reference to disposition to action, although he is conscious of the enormous complexity which one will face in developing this view. For giving such a definition the kind of disposition to action which is to be called 'cognitive' must be specified but a precise specification of it is practically impossible. Stevenson admits that this can be done only in the 'vaguest approximation'. He, then, says that

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27. Ibid., p. 62.

'cognition must be conceived - as a disposition whose response is modified by that of many other dispositions.'<sup>28</sup> He further says that in emphasising dispositions to action, he is not offering any uncompromising defence of behaviouristic psychology. His insistence on overt action is not meant to discredit an introspective analysis but is intended to supplement it.

Stevenson calls the disposition of a sign to affect cognition its 'descriptive' meaning and the disposition of a sign to affect 'emotion' its 'emotive' meaning. He takes these meanings as the features in virtue of which descriptive and evaluative expressions differ with each other. According to him the distinguishing feature of a descriptive expression is its having a descriptive meaning, while the distinguishing character of an evaluative expression is its disposition to affect emotion or attitude. Thus descriptive and evaluative expressions are distinguished on the basis of their meanings.

But the moment descriptive expressions are distinguished from evaluative ones on the basis of their descriptive meaning, a question arises as to how descriptive meanings attain the precision that we find the descriptive expressions possessing in practical communication. Stevenson answers this question by bringing in the linguistic rules and referring to the role they play in communication. He develops this point with the help of an example. He tells us how a child begins assigning

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28. Ibid., p. 66.

precise meaning to the arithmetical expressions such as '100', '1000' and so on. He claims that to a great extent the child begins using these expressions precisely by learning the arithmetical rules, such as '100 comes next after 99', '10 times 10 is 100', '1000 divided by 10 is 100', and so on. He maintains that by learning such rules the child learns to go from one numerical expression to another and begins to react more constantly to any one of them than he would to a sign of which he has not learned rules of use. Such rules, he says, form a part of the conditioning process upon which a complete understanding of a symbol depends. So, it will be incorrect to think that a child first acquires a full understanding of an arithmetical symbol and then learns the rules for manipulating it. Its reason is that 'the meaning of each symbol is modified by that of every other symbol to which the rules of arithmetic relate it.<sup>29</sup> Stevenson thinks that this function of linguistic rules pervades the whole of descriptive language. So, when faced with the problem of accounting for the precision of descriptive meaning, he tells us that it is by referring back to other signs that we are able to keep the meaning of descriptive expression fixed, and this referring back process is regulated by linguistic rules. 'Under linguistic rules', Stevenson says, 'we must include all manner of "a priori" statements, definitions, and the stipulations that exclude certain combinations of words.'<sup>30</sup>

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29. Ibid., p. 68.

30. Ibid., p. 70.

Stevenson considers the role which linguistic rules play in determining descriptive meaning so vital that he includes in the definition of descriptive meaning the contribution of linguistic rules. The revised definition reads thus:

The 'descriptive meaning' of a sign is its disposition to affect cognition, provided that the disposition is caused by an elaborate process of conditioning that has attended the sign's use in communication, and provided that the disposition is rendered fixed, at least to a considerable degree, by linguistic rules.<sup>31</sup>

In a later writing Stevenson introduces two terms in order to make more precise his earlier formulation of his position on the nature of the descriptive meaning of a sign. He says that although the 'descriptive' meaning of a sign is not that which the sign stands for, yet the thoughts involved in descriptive meaning are always about something. He defines descriptive meaning by saying that 'a sign "strictly designates" X if and only if it has a descriptive meaning that is about X.'<sup>32</sup> He defines the term 'strictly designate' in terms of 'strictly evoke' and says that 'S strictly designates X, for Mr. A, if and only if S tends to strictly evoke in Mr. A a thought about X.' He also specifies that S is 'strictly evoking' Mr. A's thought about X could be said of S only if the following three conditions are fulfilled:

1. 'S is causing Mr. A to think about X and is part-sufficient immediate cause.'<sup>33</sup> S is comparatively a more important

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31. Ibid., p. 70.

32. Facts and Values (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 1963) p. 158.

33. Ibid., p. 156.



cause than the others and it is of a type which could be used at will either by Mr. A or by others.

2. Mr. A's thinking about X, in experiencing S must be 'conditioned' by his past observations of relations between S and X, or must be due to some of his beliefs about the relations between S and X, that is to say, these relations are not inevitable.

3. S must be related by syntactical rules to other signs.

He further says that 'when a sign does not strictly designate X but does tend to cause a thought about X, I shall say that it "suggests a thought about " X',<sup>34</sup> but does not have a descriptive meaning.

He admits an exception to the above definition. He says that an entirely new expression, which has no previous use in communication, may be assigned descriptive meaning, provided that linguistic rules relate it to those expressions which are already in use. He gives such a great weight to the role of linguistic rules in descriptive meaning that he goes to the length of saying that 'when a sign persistently suggests something, this may be taken as a disposition of the sign; but being unchecked by linguistic rules, it will not be a "descriptive meaning" in the sense (not at all unconventional) which is here defined.'<sup>35</sup>

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34. Ibid., p. 158.

35. Ibid., p. 70.

### Hare: Analysis of Use

R. M. Hare adopts yet another method of explaining the distinction between descriptive and evaluative expressions. His method is to analyse the use of these expressions. He analyses the different functions which these expressions perform in order to identify the basis for distinguishing between them.

Hare begins his analysis by pointing out that there are some functions which are performed by both descriptive and evaluative expressions. Both 'can be, and often are, used for conveying information of a purely factual or descriptive character.'<sup>36</sup> He says that if he tells that 'M is a good motor car', when Mr. X does not know anything about M but knows what sort of motor-car is normally called good, then he certainly gets some information about M from the above remark. Mr. X will certainly charge him (Hare) of misleading him if he subsequently finds that M will not go over thirty miles per hour, or consumes both oil and petrol in equal quantity, or has holes on its roof. The cause of Mr. X's complaint will be the same had he found the car black when he was told that it was red.

Hare further points out that expressions of both these types are used, at times, not for actually conveying information, but for teaching our listener to use such expressions,

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36. The Language of Morals (London: Oxford University Press, Paperback 1964), p. 112.

say 'good' and 'red', and then to use them for giving or getting information. Suppose X, does not know anything about motor cars except what type of conveyance is called a motor-car. Now if Y tells him that 'N is a good motor car', 'N, O and P are also good motor-cars' and if X subsequently examines each one of them, then he will certainly know what type of motor-cars are generally called good, or at least what sort of motor-cars Y calls good. In this way he may not know much about motor cars, but if he gets the opportunity of inspecting a certain number of motor-cars which Y calls good, then he will surely be in a position to know what sort of motor-car one would be, if Y called it good, provided he was careful in inspecting the motor-cars which Y called good. In the case of expressions like 'red' this process is called 'explaining' the meaning of the expression, but in the case of 'good' one may 'only call it so loosely and in a secondary sense...'.<sup>37</sup> Hare prefers to call it the method of 'explaining or conveying or setting forth the standard of goodness in motor cars.'<sup>38</sup> For, the standard of goodness, similar to the meaning of 'red', is usually known to people and is commonly accepted by them.

Descriptive and evaluative expressions resemble in one more respect, says Hare. Both 'red' and 'good' 'can vary as regards the exactitude or vagueness of the information which

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37. Ibid., p. 114.

38. Ibid., p. 114.

they do or can convey.'<sup>39</sup> An expression like 'red motor car' is used very loosely. Any motor-car whose shade can be placed somewhere between purple and orange could be called a red motor-car without abusing language. In the same way the standard for judging a motor car to be good is also not precise. There are, of course, some characteristics, such as the inability of exceeding the speed of thirty miles per hour, which can definitely serve as the criterion for withholding the epithet 'good' from a motor car, but there is no such characteristic (or a set of characteristics) which a motor car must have in order to be called 'a good motor car' and in the absence of which the epithet 'good' cannot be applied to it. But in the cases of both 'red' and 'good' one could be precise, if one wanted to be. For certain purposes one may decide to withhold the designation 'red' unless the colour of the object reached the purity of a certain degree. Similarly one may also decide a set of characteristics all of which a motor car must possess for being called a good motor car and not otherwise.

Hence, Hare concludes that looseness or precision in the criterion for the use of an expression cannot be made a basis for explaining the distinction between descriptive and evaluative expressions. Both 'red' and 'good' can be descriptively loose or exact, depending on how precisely the criterion for their use has been laid down by convention. So, if one thinks

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39. Ibid. p. 114.

that expressions of the sort 'good' are descriptively looser than expressions of the sort 'red', then he is certainly mistaken. 'Words like "red", can be extremely loose, without becoming to the least degree evaluative; and expressions like "good sewage effluent" can be the subject of a very rigid criteria, without in the least ceasing to be evaluative.'<sup>40</sup>

Here Hare issues a warning. He says that by finding these similarities in the functions of these two types of expressions - 'red' and 'good' - one may think that there is no distinction between them and then may deny the distinction between descriptive and evaluative expressions. But if someone does this he is certainly mistaken, for, although both these kinds of words - 'red' and 'good' - are used to perform functions which may be called informative, expressions like 'good' are used to perform some other function, not performed by expressions like 'red', which is more basic to their use and which must not, therefore, be ignored.

Hare asserts that the informative function which expressions of the sort 'good' perform is their secondary function. Their primary function is commending.

The commending function is peculiar to value-expressions. He brings out this point by showing that the informative function of 'good' can be performed with equal efficiency by another word, say, 'doog', which has no commendatory force. But by

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40. Ibid., p. 115.



doing this the use of 'doog' cannot replace the use of 'good' completely. 'Doog' can be used for giving and receiving information like 'good', provided the criteria for its use are known, but unlike 'good', it becomes meaningless in the absence of the knowledge of its criteria in particular contexts. The criterion for the application of 'doog' could be made known in the same way in which the criterion for the use of 'good' was made known in the previous example i.e. by saying 'M is a doog motor-car' 'N is a doog motor car' and so on, and giving opportunity to the person concerned of inspecting M, N, etc., attentively. Now, if the criterion for the application of doogness in motor-cars has been kept the same as what the criterion of 'goodness' was in the previous examples, then 'doog' will do all the jobs of giving and receiving information about motor-cars which 'good' does.

Although 'doog' succeeds in performing all the information-giving functions of 'good' (though only in connection with motor-cars), Hare asserts that it does only half the jobs which good is used to do. It does not perform the function of commending. So, one may say that 'doog' functions only as a descriptive expression. Here it is worth noticing that a person learns to use the word 'doog' by being given examples of the application of this word and subsequently by applying it to new examples. Hence, it would be quite natural to say that what the person who was giving examples of the



application of doog was doing was teaching the meaning of 'doog' to the learner. This again shows how true it is to say that when one learns such a lesson for the expression 'doog motor-car' (i.e. learning the criterion of its application) one is learning its meaning. 'But with the word "good" it is misleading to say this.'<sup>41</sup> He explains this remark by pointing out that the meaning of 'good' motor-car (in another sense of 'meaning')

might be known by someone who did not know the criteria of its application; he would know, if someone said that a motor-car was a good one, that he was commending it; and to know that would be to know the meaning of the expression. ...someone might know about 'good' all the things which my learner learnt about the word 'doog' (namely how to apply the word to the right objects, and use it for giving and getting information) and yet be said not to know its meaning; for he might not know that to call a motor-car good was to commend it.<sup>42</sup>

Here, thus, concludes that the commending function can serve as a basis for distinguishing value-expressions from descriptive ones. An expression is evaluative, he would say, if, and only if, its primary function is to commend.

### Conclusion

Here, it will not be out of place to point out that in spite of the differences in the methods used by these thinkers for distinguishing a descriptive expression from an evaluative one, there seem to be some important insights which are commonly

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41. Ibid., p. 117.

42. Ibid., p. 117.

shared by all of them. Moore's basic insight, that a value-expression differs from a descriptive one in kind and so a value property cannot be fully defined in terms of some natural property or properties, is shared by many important subsequent thinkers including Dewey, Stevenson, Hare etc. Moore's vague apprehension, in his paper 'The Concept of Intrinsic Value', that the distinguishing feature of an evaluative expression from a descriptive one has to be located in its function and not in its denotata, has also been shared by these thinkers and has guided them in their search for the differentiating character of these expressions.

Dewey believes that the feature which distinguishes an evaluative expression from a descriptive one is its action guiding function. He calls an evaluative judgment a 'practical' judgment and emphasizes that an evaluative judgment has a claim on future action. But he differs from both Stevenson and Hare as regards the manner in which a value-expression performs its action-guiding function. Unlike them Dewey says that a value expression guides action by making prediction as to what the object of evaluation will do. He, also, seems to believe that a value expression does not guide action in a direct manner by telling one to do something but in an indirect way by telling what the object of valuation will do, thus by more subtly influencing one's beliefs.

Stevenson says that the feature which distinguishes a value-expression from a descriptive one is its imperative function. But, realising the difference that an imperative functions in a direct manner while a value expression functions in an indirect way he says that a value expression has a quasi-imperative function. Nevertheless he accepts that a value-expression like a descriptive one has a cognitive meaning but that is 'attended by ambiguity'.

Hare agrees with Stevenson that a value expression performs two functions, viz. cognitive and imperative, and also that the imperative function is the character which distinguishes it from a descriptive expression. But he parts company with Stevenson on the question, 'how a value expression performs the imperative function?' Stevenson says that although a value-expression has a quasi-imperative nature it does not function as an out right imperative, but by a flexible mechanism of suggestion. He, therefore, emphasizes its emotive nature. But Hare, on his part, does not accept the emotive or predictive nature of any value expression and lays emphasis on its prescriptive character. He points out the distinction between the process of telling someone to do something and getting him to do it. He says that these two functions are quite distinct logically from each other. Getting something done by someone by persuading him or convincing him to do it is very different an activity from telling him to do it. Hare, therefore, emphasises

the prescriptive nature of value-expressions. He says that the prescriptive nature of a value-expression becomes more evident when we pay attention to moral judgments. All moral judgments, he says, are, in a way, given as a reply to the question 'What shall I do?', and so are prescriptive in nature.

Here I feel that Stevenson is nearer the truth than Hare. Even moral expressions are used not only to tell people what to do in a particular situation but also to exhort or evoke an emotion. When somebody consults his friend as to which school he should send his son to study, he is not expecting a prescription or an order from his friend but an advice. And, I think, Hare will also agree that although an advice may get the same thing performed as a prescription, yet he will distinguish an advice from a prescription. Here, it seems to me that although a value-expression has a prescriptive function, it does not always function like a direct prescription but in some more subtle ways.

Thus I find that inspite of the fact that these thinkers use different methods for locating the character which distinguishes a value-expression from a descriptive one, some basic agreements are definitely there. All these thinkers agree that (1) a value-expression cannot fully be defined in terms of descriptive expression(s) only and (2) the character which distinguishes a value-expression from a descriptive one is to be

located in its function and not in what it denotes. Dewey, Stevenson, and Hare further agree that a value-expression has both cognitive and action-guiding functions, but what distinguishes it from a descriptive expression is its action-guiding function.

In the subsequent chapters I shall make use of this feature as the distinguishing characteristic of an evaluative expression, and discuss some of the important issues connected with the problem of moral valuation in the light of it.



## CHAPTER II

### MORAL AND NON-MORAL VALUATION

In the last chapter we discussed some important methods of distinguishing an evaluative expression from a descriptive one and came to the conclusion that the distinguishing feature of an evaluative expression is its action-guiding function. Although all evaluative expressions perform this function, we do not treat all of them alike and make a further division among them. When value-judgments such as 'X is a good man', 'Lying is bad', 'This motor-car is good', 'This photograph is bad' etc. are pronounced, we make a distinction between them and say that of the above the first two express moral evaluation, whereas the latter two express non-moral valuation. Here I shall accept the distinction between moral and non-moral judgments and shall proceed to look for those features which serve as the basis of this distinction.

#### Moore: 'Duty' and 'Expediency'

Moore does not seem to have given any systematic thought on the features which distinguish a moral evaluation from a non-moral one. He says that 'ethics is undoubtedly concerned with the question what good conduct is'<sup>1</sup> but he uses ethics not to mean a study of moral judgments but to mean 'the general enquiry

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1. Principia Ethica (Cambridge: At the University Press, Paperback, 1959) p. 2.

into what is good.'<sup>2</sup> Further he says that 'good' is a denoting word and it denotes in all the various contexts of its use, a property which is simple, unanalysable and non-natural in nature. Hence, the distinction between moral and non-moral evaluation cannot be explained with reference to the nature of goodness.

Thus the only alternative left for locating the distinguishing feature of a moral valuation from a non-moral one is to examine the characteristics of the objects of the two kinds of evaluations. In Moore's scheme it amounts to examining the characteristics of human conduct. But he has not analysed the characteristics of conducts with a view to locating the features which could account for the distinction between moral and non-moral valuation. He has, however, divided conducts into two classes, while distinguishing duty from expediency. He says that there is a class of actions which commonly excite the specially moral sentiments. People generally have strong natural inclination against the performance of this class of actions. And, the most obvious good consequences of the doing or non-doing of these actions affect people other than the agent himself. He says<sup>3</sup> that the class of actions which are generally called 'duties' has these characteristics. There is an other class of actions, he continues, which does not commonly excite the specifically moral sentiments. People, almost universally, have a strong, natural inclination to do these actions;

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2. Ibid., p. 2.

3. Ibid., pp. 168-69.

and all the most obvious effects of these actions, which are commonly considered good, affect the agent himself. He says that these are the peculiarities of the class of actions which are generally called 'expedient'.

Now had 'duty' been used only in moral contexts and had 'expediency' been used in non-moral contexts only, then the above distinction between the two expressions would have been sufficient to explain the distinction between moral and non-moral valuation. But, we find that this is not obviously the case. We use 'duty' not only in moral contexts but also in non-moral ones. Suppose that a painter has two offers at a time - one to paint a film poster and the other to paint a landscape - and both the offers are equally paying, but he thinks that painting a landscape will be of more lasting aesthetic value than painting a film poster. Now if he judges that it is his duty to paint a landscape and not a film poster at that time, then his judgment about his duty will commonly not be taken to be a moral judgment. Hence, we conclude that Moore has not given us any criterion for distinguishing a moral evaluation from a non-moral one.

#### Dewey: Two Kinds of Values

Unlike Moore, Dewey seems to maintain a distinction amongst values. He holds that the distinguishing feature of a moral from a non-moral evaluation is not to be located in the nature of the deliberation but in the kind of value involved. He says,

Moral deliberation differs from other forms not as a process of forming a judgment and arriving at knowledge but in the kind of value which is thought about. The value is technical, professional, economic, etc., as long as one thinks of it as something which one can aim at and attain by way of having, possessing; as something to be got or to be missed. Precisely the same object will have a moral value when it is thought of as making a difference in the self, as determining what one will be, instead of merely what one will have.<sup>4</sup>

Here, he seems to maintain that there are two kinds of values; one of which could be acquired only by possessing them but the acquisition of the other would make a difference in the self. That is to say, the possession of the one kind of value simply decides what its possessor will have, while the possession of the other kind decides what one will be. If in an evaluation the value is of the first kind, then it is non-moral, but, if, the value is of the second kind, then it is moral.

However, he does not seem to be justified in making such a distinction between values. In maintaining this distinction he has to introduce the notion of 'self' which is highly controversial. But, even if we mean character or disposition by 'self', as he seems to mean, the distinction between values remains unexplained. I fail to see how the acquisition of a professional value would simply determine what one would have and not what one would be. For, the acquisition of a non-moral value as that present in a good painting certainly determines what kind of a painter the painter is going to be and not only

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4. Theory of the Moral Life (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1960), p. 134.

what value he will have. Similarly, one cannot even possess economic value without becoming a wealthy man. To me it seems that the possession of goodness in any profession influences the being of its possessor in a very significant manner and determines what kind of person (with respect to his field or trade) he is.

But if Dewey is not taken literally, he seems to be referring to a commonly accepted fact. If he is taken to mean, when he says that one kind of values simply determines what 'one will have' while those of the other kind determine 'what one will be', that some values have greater influence on human character than some others, then what he says is obviously correct. But this certainly will not help us in distinguishing adequately between moral and non-moral valuation.

### Stevenson: Feelings and Attitudes

Stevenson believes that whenever a person has to take a decision regarding the value of something the question in effect boils down to making up his mind whether to approve or disapprove of it. Hence whenever he has to judge the value of something, his attitudes play a more conspicuous role than his thoughts or beliefs do. So long as his attitudes remain in a state of conflict he remains undecided about the value of the thing. In the state of indecision, some of his attitudes are in favour of the thing in question, while some others are against it. And untill he is able to resolve his conflict of attitudes, i.e. to make his attitudes speak in one voice, or be decisively for or against



the thing concerned, he is not able to pronounce his judgment.

Hence, when faced with the problem of distinguishing a moral evaluation from a non-moral one he focuses his attention on feelings and attitudes. He concedes that the distinction between what is morally good and what is non-morally good could be made in several ways, but he thinks that the most important way of making the distinction is to distinguish them on the basis of the kind of attitudes involved in the two kinds of valuation.

He points out that all our attitudes are not alike. Some of them are 'peculiarly moral'<sup>5</sup>, not in the sense in which 'moral' is an antonym of 'immoral' but in the sense in which it is an antonym of 'non-moral'. The difference between moral and non-moral attitudes become clear when we reflect on the feelings that go with them.

The peculiarly moral attitudes manifest themselves to introspection by feelings of guilt, remorse, indignation, shock, and so on, or else (when their object prospers rather than fails to prosper) by a specially heightened feeling of security and internal strength.<sup>6</sup>

He tells us that these manifestations of attitudes in our introspection are indicative of many other characteristics. However, he points out only one of them. He says that when we act in accordance with a peculiarly moral approval we have, as it were, a secondary approval. This secondary approval in its turn makes

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5. C.L. Stevenson, Facts and Values (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1963) p. 59.

6. Ibid., p. 59.

as proud of recognizing our primary approval. But when we fail to act in accordance with a peculiarly moral approval or, when our peculiarly moral approval is outweighed by the strength of a non-moral disapproval we have a strong tendency to hide our conduct from our introspection. And when we fail to conceal our conduct, we have a feeling of being a victim of forces which, if given a chance to live over that period again, we would have liked to control. We think that if it were possible to live our life all over again, we would have been cautious enough to thwart these attitudes before they could become ingrained in our personality.

He holds that even some of our personal decisions could also be called 'peculiarly moral', like some of our attitudes, when they are taken to resolve a conflict between one peculiarly moral attitude and another. However, even if one of the conflicting attitudes is of a different kind, the decisions would not be called 'peculiarly moral'. In his own words:

...when an individual has a conflict between one peculiarly moral attitude and another, and when he is attempting to make these attitudes, and only these, speak with one voice, then his personal decision, too, can be called 'peculiarly moral', and will belong to 'ethics' in a quite narrow sense of the term. But if some or all of the attitudes involved are not of this sort then his decision, though still evaluative, is not 'peculiarly moral' and belongs to 'ethics' in a broad sense of the term only.

Hence, we can say, in short, that for Stevenson whether or not an evaluation is moral is to be decided by the kind of feeling or attitude involved. So, when a value expression

succeeds in expressing or arousing a 'peculiarly moral' feeling or attitude, it is a moral value judgment, otherwise it is non-moral.

Now, if we use Stevenson's criterion we will have to keep on changing the label of value judgments and rules of action from 'moral' to 'non-moral' and vice-versa, in accordance with their arousing peculiarly moral feelings on one occasion and non-moral feelings on another. Even our generally accepted moral judgments, such as 'Lying is bad', 'It is wrong to break a promise', etc., will sometimes have to be called moral and at some other times non-moral judgments, depending upon the feelings or attitudes expressed or aroused. But, this does not seem to conform with our ordinary use of these words.

The experience of feelings by an individual depends upon his psychological make-up and the social system he belongs to. If a person is brought up in a society which has very rigid customs, and if he has a highly developed ego, then he will feel a sense of guilt or remorse even if he unknowingly violates a social convention, say, at a formal dinner and this is pointed out to him. But no body will call such a convention a moral rule because its violation has aroused a certain kind of feeling in him.

### No Logical Distinction

Inspite of the difference in moral and non-moral valuations as stated above Stevenson holds that on the plane of Logic there is no difference between them. For him all value judgments perform two kinds of functions, i.e. they are cognitive and quasi-imperative. Moore, Dewey and Hare also agree with Stevenson in maintaining that there does not exist any logical distinction here. Both types of value judgments perform the same functions and could be questioned or supported in the same way.

Hare argues at some length against those who think that the use of a value-expression in moral contexts differs from its use in non-moral ones. Using 'good' as the key value expression he examines three kinds of reasons, which he thinks, have led people to believe that the use of 'good' in moral contexts differs totally from its use in non-moral ones, and disposes them off convincingly.

He tells us that one reason which has led people to believe that the use of 'good' differs in its moral and non-moral contexts is connected with the distinction between intrinsic and instrumental goodness. This distinction is made on the supposition that

there are some objects which are commended for their own sakes, and do not have an obvious function beyond their mere existence, to commend such an object is to

do something quite different from commending an object which does have a function.<sup>8</sup>

He then shows that this supposition is totally wrong. For whenever we commend a function or an object itself, we commend it for possessing a certain virtue or virtues (qualities). In both the cases the virtues listed may have cross-references. The simple difference in calling a performance good and an object good is that in the case of the former we commend the performance in a direct manner and the object only indirectly, while in the latter case we commend the object in a direct way. He also points out that it is not always easy to decide whether a virtue belongs to the object or its performance. One of the virtues required for a pineapple to be good is that it must be sweet. But is its sweetness an intrinsic quality of the pineapple or is it a disposition to produce a desirable sensation in its eater? He also asks '... are we to say that "inducing heat in my skin" is a performance of the bath, or are we to say that "being hot" is a quality of the bath?'<sup>9</sup> We cannot draw a precise distinction between intrinsic and instrumental goodness unless we can answer these questions. Hare concedes that there may be a difference in commending two types of things, say a fire extinguisher and a sunset. We commend them for entirely different reasons. But there would be no logical difference in the virtues or standards on the ground of which

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8. R.M.Hare, The Language of Morals (London: Oxford University Press, Paperback 1964) p. 137.

9. Ibid., p. 139.



we call either one good. He says that the logical apparatus of virtues or standards i.e. the good making qualities is sufficiently general to cover both instrumental and intrinsic goodness. Hence, he says that if one sees this he would realise that the same logical apparatus would also be applicable to the virtues or standards of moral or non-moral goodness.

The second reason, which has led people to think that the use of 'good' in moral contexts differs from its use in non-moral ones, is that the good-making characteristics in the two contexts differ. But this reason is, according to Hare, untenable. For, the good-making qualities not only differ in the two contexts but also in different non-moral contexts. The qualities which make a chronometer good certainly differ from the qualities which make a cactus good. Hence if one goes on making a difference in the use of 'good' on the basis of the difference in the good-making qualities he would end-up with innumerable meanings of 'good'.

The third reason is the feeling that 'moral goodness' is more august and more important than non-moral one. Here, he says, that the cause of the difference between the feelings aroused by moral and non-moral goodness is not the difference in the logic of 'good' in its two uses but something else. The reason why we get more stirred up about the goodness of a man than about the goodness of a chronometer or a cactus is that we ourselves are men. The acceptance of the judgment that a

particular man's action is good in a certain situation involves the acceptance of the judgment that had we ourselves been in that situation it would have been good to have done likewise. Since it is quite possible that we ourselves are sometimes placed in a similar circumstance, we feel so deeply about this case. But for those cases in which it is less likely that we ourselves could ever be placed in similar circumstances, our feeling is not so intense. In short, a judgment which is likely to have a bearing upon our own future action evokes deeper feeling than that which is less likely or unlikely to have such a bearing.

He says that the above observation is confirmed by the behaviours of technicians and artists. They do feel intensely about the goodness of the objects of their field of interest. The reason does not seem to be merely commercial competition - for it is possible to compete without malice. But the fact that they also feel themselves bound to imbibe the characteristic features of the good objects in their own works and avoid those of bad ones - which sometimes might even mean introducing important alterations in their work, naturally a painful process - seems to be the reason of their feeling so intensely. Further, why a technician or an artist does not feel as intensely about the goodness of the objects of his field as he feels about the goodness of a man is that he cannot avoid being a man as he can get out of being

an artist or a technician. If a technician or an artist is forced to accept that his rival's work is better than anything he has produced or could produce, then he might give up his present job and begin doing something else. But when a man is forced to accept that the life of St. Francis was morally better than his own, and if he really accepts this, then he has no alternative but to try to become like St. Francis. This also explains why most of our value judgments about saints and greatmen are merely conventional, not genuine.

Moreover, if we differ in our evaluation of the characters of people, we cannot even agree to differ, and so we feel very intensely about them. For, we can agree to differ only if we are sure that we will not be forced to make a choice which will vitally affect the choice of others. But, we cannot withdraw ourselves in this way from an evaluation of a man's character, because such a valuation restricts our choice in an important way. But this state of affairs is not peculiar to moral valuations only. This is so with all the choices which are to be made cooperatively. He says that members of the Kon-tiki expedition could not have agreed to differ about how to build their rafts. Nevertheless, one can get out of building rafts but one cannot easily avoid living in a society with other men. Hence we get more deeply moved by moral questions, than on any other.

Again, since all moral judgments are likely to influence our conduct in some vital ways we cannot totally accept them without being bound to abide by them. And this explains why a moral judgment has such an important place in our life. He says that the reason why a moral expression often succeeds in arousing deep emotion is that the situations in which they are typically used are those about which we feel deeply. This clearly shows that the special status of an emotive expression does not require a special logical apparatus to support it. A moral evaluative expression gets this special status from the fact that while using the ordinary apparatus of value language we commend or condemn such actions of our life with which we are more deeply concerned. He, therefore, remarks that 'the "emotivity" of much moral utterance which some have thought to be the essence of evaluative language, is only a symptom - and most unreliable one - of an evaluative use of words.'<sup>10</sup> He, thus, rejects the claim that we require different logical apparatuses to explain the use of 'good' in moral and non-moral contexts.

#### Hare: Class of Comparison Man

He says that there are two questions which can always be asked legitimately in elucidating a judgment containing 'good', such as 'This is a good one'. One, we can always ask 'What is the class in which the evaluative comparison is made?'

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10. Ibid., p. 144.

and two, 'What makes you call it good?' The second question concerns the virtue or goodmaking characteristics. Although the two questions are not quite independent, for what distinguishes a class of comparison from another is the set of virtues to be looked for in the respective classes, yet they help us in understanding the evaluative judgment in a better way.

Hare maintains that a moral value judgment is to be distinguished from a non-moral one on the basis of the class in which the evaluative comparison is made. He says that

Sometimes we commend an act within the class of acts having an effect upon the agent's future happiness; sometimes we commend an act within the class of acts indicative of his moral character, that is to say those acts which show whether or not he is a good man - and the class of comparison 'man' in this context is the class 'man to try to become like'.<sup>11</sup>

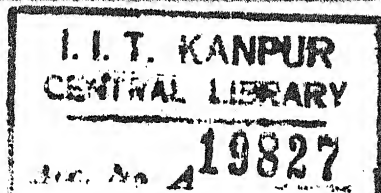
The context of commending always tells us in which of these two classes we are commending. Whenever one is commending in the class of man - man to try to become like - the judgment is moral, otherwise not. He further says:

When we use the word 'good' in order to commend morally, we are always directly or indirectly commending people. Even when we use the expression 'good act' or others like it the reference is indirectly to human characters.<sup>12</sup>

This is why a judgment like 'This is a right action' is called moral only if the conduct is commended as a manifestation of a character which is 'man to try to become like'.

11. Ibid., p. 144.

12. Ibid., p. 144.





Hare, here, seems to suggest that whenever we make an evaluation of some object we compare it with other objects of the same class and when the class of comparison is man the evaluation becomes moral or else non-moral. But I do not think that whenever we judge a thing to be good or bad, we invariably compare it with other objects of its own class. Many a times when we call a painting beautiful or a car good we do not think of any other painting or car. We call the painting beautiful or the car good because in our opinion they possess certain qualities and not because we compare them with other paintings or cars as the case may be; we do not always judge a thing as better than the others. Hence when he says that whether or not a valuation is moral depends upon the class of comparison man he does not seem to be striking the nail on the head.

But I find myself in substantial agreement with him when he says that 'when we use the word "good" in order to commend morally, we are always directly or indirectly commending people'.<sup>13</sup> I believe that what makes a valuation moral or non-moral does not involve feelings as Stevenson holds, nor does it depend on the kind of value in question, but on the object of valuation. When we evaluate human character the valuation is moral otherwise non-moral.

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13. Ibid., p. 144.

## CHAPTER III

### THE JUDGMENT OF INTRINSIC VALUE

#### Intuitionist's Position

Moore takes note of the two ways of judging the goodness of a thing. Sometimes it is judged to be good as an end while at some other times as good in being a cause of or a necessary condition for, the existence of some other thing which is good as an end. He calls the former judgment a judgment of 'intrinsic value' and the latter a judgment of 'good as a means' or 'value as a means'.<sup>1</sup>

Moore uses several expressions to refer to the concept of 'intrinsic value'. He says: 'whenever he thinks of "intrinsic value" or "intrinsic worth" or says that a thing "ought to exist", he has before his mind the unique object - the unique property of things - which I mean by "good".'<sup>2</sup> Thus he uses the expressions 'intrinsic good', 'intrinsic value', 'intrinsic worth', 'ought to exist', and 'good' as synonyms unless the context shows otherwise.

He makes a distinction between a judgment of 'intrinsic value' and a judgment of 'objective value'. He holds that there is an important difference between the concepts of 'objectivity' and 'internality'. He says:

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1. Principia Ethica (Cambridge: At the University Press, First paperback, 1959) pp. 21 and 24.

2. Ibid., p. 17.

...from the proposition that a particular kind of value is "intrinsic" it does follow that it must be "objective", the converse implication by no means holds, but on the contrary it is perfectly easy to conceive theories of e.g. "goodness", according to which goodness would, in the strict sense, be "objective" and yet would not be "intrinsic".<sup>3</sup>

He explains this assertion by taking the evolutionary theory of 'good' as an example. According to this theory 'better' means 'better fitted to survive'. The judgment 'one type of human being A is "better" than another type B' will then mean that 'the course of evolution tends to increase the numbers of type A and to decrease those of type B'. Obviously 'better' on this interpretation is as objective as any concept could be. But it is not intrinsic, for being 'better' is a predicate which does not depend merely on the intrinsic nature of A and B. Although under the present conditions A is more favoured than B, in some changed conditions B may be more favoured than A.

He makes a distinction between 'ultimately good' or 'good for its own sake', on the one hand, and 'intrinsically good' on the other. He says:

...these expressions are not commonly carefully defined; and it is worth noticing that, if our theory does assert these propositions, the expressions 'ultimately good' or 'good for its own sake' must be understood in a different sense from that which has been assigned above to the expression 'intrinsically good'. We must not take 'ultimately good' or 'good for its own sake' to be synonyms for 'intrinsically good'.<sup>4</sup>

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3. Philosophical Studies (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., Paperback, 1960) p. 255.

4. Ethics (Geoffrey Cumberlege: Oxford University Press, 1912, reprinted in 1952), p. 47.

He says that they resemble in meaning i.e. whenever it is judged that a thing is 'ultimately good' or 'good for its own sake' or 'intrinsically good' it is always asserted that it would be good, even if it existed quite alone. However they differ in respect to the fact that, 'whereas a whole which is "intrinsically good" may contain parts which are not intrinsically good, i.e. would not be good, if they existed quite alone; anything which is "ultimately good" or "good for its own sake" can contain no such parts.'<sup>5</sup>

He first defines intrinsic goodness in the following way:

By calling one effect or set of effect intrinsically better than another it means that it is better in itself quite apart from any accompaniments or further effects which it may have. That is to say: To assert of any one thing, A, that it is intrinsically better than another, B, is to assert that if A existed quite alone, without any accompaniments or effects whatever - if, in short, A constituted the whole universe, it would be better that such a universe should exist, than that a universe which consisted solely of B should exist instead.<sup>6</sup>

He puts this idea, in short, as the following:

By saying that a thing is intrinsically good, it means that it would be a good thing that the thing in question should exist, even if it existed quite alone, without any further accompaniments or effects whatever.<sup>7</sup>

By a judgment of 'good as a means', on the other hand, he means in effect, a conjunction of two judgments, - one

5. Ibid., pp. 47-48.

6. Ibid., p. 37.

7. Ibid., p. 42.

causal and the other about intrinsic goodness. He says that 'whenever we judge that a thing is "good as a means" we are making a judgment with regard to its causal relations: We judge both that it will have a particular kind of effect and that that effect will be good in itself.'<sup>8</sup>

He holds that all judgments of 'intrinsic value', are synthetic, self-evident, and necessarily true, if true. He clearly says that 'propositions about the good are all of them synthetic and never analytic.'<sup>9</sup> At another place he says this with more emphasis:

... the fundamental principles of Ethics must be synthetic propositions, declaring what things, and in what degree, possess a simple and unanalysable property which may be called 'intrinsic value' or 'goodness'.<sup>10</sup>

#### Such value-judgments

...are all of them, in Kant's phrase 'synthetic': they all must rest in the end upon some proposition which must be simply accepted or rejected, which cannot be logically deduced from any other proposition. This result, which follows from our first investigation, may be otherwise expressed by saying that the fundamental principles of Ethics must be self-evident.<sup>11</sup>

By calling such a judgment 'self-evident', he means that it is evident or true by itself and is not inferred from any other proposition. He does not mean that the proposition is true because it is evident to somebody or because it appears to be true.

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8. Principia Ethica (Cambridge: At the University Press, Paperback 1959), p. 22.

9. Ibid., p. 7.

10. Ibid., p. 58.



According to Moore there is a large number of things which have intrinsic value. There are many things which are positively bad and there is still a great number of things which are neither good nor bad but indifferent. But things having positive and intrinsic value, as well as those which are indifferent, may belong to wholes of various degrees of complexity. And, these wholes themselves may have intrinsic value. But 'the value of such a whole bears no regular proportion to the sum of the value of its parts.'<sup>12</sup> For example, a whole W, which has X and Y as its parts, might have a certain amount of positive intrinsic value, when neither X nor Y have any such value, or even when X, or Y, or both, have negative value. And, even when X, Y, or both, have positive intrinsic value, the value of W might be different from the sum of the values of X and Y. Again, if one of X and Y has a positive value and the other a negative one, still the amount of the value of W might not be the same as the difference of the values of X and Y.

While discussing the intrinsic value of things, Moore makes a distinction between the value of a thing 'as a whole' and its value 'on the whole'. The value of a whole W, which bears no regular proportion to the sum of the values of its parts, X and Y, is called the value of W 'as a whole'. On the other hand, 'the value which a thing possesses on the whole may be said to be equivalent to the sum of the value

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12. Ibid., p. 27.

which it possesses as a whole, together with the intrinsic values which may belong to any of its parts.<sup>13</sup> That is to say, if W has a positive value 'as a whole' and of X and Y one has positive value and the other negative value, then the intrinsic value of W 'on the whole' will be equivalent to the sum of the value of W 'as a whole' and the positive value of its parts. Thus the value of W 'on the whole', in this case, will be greater than the value of W 'as a whole'.

Moore's statements, as explained above, give the impression that in his opinion comparisons of value might be expressed in simple arithmetic, analogous to the arithmetic of money accountancy. Though he has not given any example of quantitative comparison, yet it is difficult to understand what else he can mean when he uses expressions like 'a greater sum of intrinsic value',<sup>14</sup> 'the balance of intrinsic value is greater than...',<sup>15</sup> and 'the sum of the value of its parts'.<sup>16</sup> He even uses algebraic equations<sup>17</sup> while illustrating the effects of compounding the positive and negative values belonging to a whole and its parts. While rejecting the view that intrinsic value is always in proportion to the quantity of pleasure, he also says,

Whatever single kind of thing may be proposed as a measure of intrinsic value, instead of pleasure—whether knowledge, or virtue, or wisdom, or love—

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13. *Ibid.*, p. 214.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 25.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 25.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 27.

17. *Ethics* (Geoffrey Cambridge: Oxford University Press, 1912, reprinted in 1952), p. 150.

it is, I think, quite plain that it is not such a measure, ... however valuable any one of these things may be, we may always add to the value of a whole which contains any one of them, not only by adding more of that one, but also by adding something else instead.<sup>18</sup>

Thus while denying that any single natural factor is the measure of intrinsic value, he leaves us wholly baffled as to how one could calculate the value which a thing possessed 'on the whole'.

Moore prescribes the 'method of isolation' for ascertaining the intrinsic value of a thing. The method consists in keeping before one's mind the object, whose intrinsic value is in question, quite alone, absolutely unrelated with anything else, and then judging whether the predicate good would still be applicable to it. He says that 'it is absolutely essential to consider each distinguishable quality, in isolation, in order to decide what value it possesses.'<sup>19</sup> In order to answer the question 'what things have intrinsic value and in what degrees?' he says that

...it is necessary to consider what things are such that, if they existed by themselves, in absolute isolation, we should yet judge their existence to be good; and, in order to decide upon the relative degrees of value of different things, we must similarly consider what comparative value seems to attach to the isolated existence of each.<sup>20</sup>

He has presented several formulations of this method. One of them is as follows:

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18. Ibid., p. 152.

19. Principia Ethica (Cambridge: At the University Press, Paperback, 1959), p. 93.

In order to discover whether any one thing is intrinsically better than another, we have always thus to consider whether it would be better that the one should exist quite alone than that the other should exist quite alone.<sup>21</sup>

But if one follows this method strictly, one will never be able to judge that the existence of a particular thing, when it is absolutely unrelated with everything else, is good or better than the existence of another thing which also exists in absolute isolation. It seems to me that if two objects exist in absolute isolation the existence of one is as good or as bad as the other's. But Moore thinks otherwise. He asks us to imagine two worlds, one beautiful and the other ugly, one filled with all the things which we admire on this earth - mountains, rivers, the sea; trees, and the sunsets, stars and moon - and all these combined in the most exquisite proportions; and the other world as simply a heap of filth containing everything that is most disgusting to people. And suppose that no human being ever has lived or seen or ever by any possibility, can live or see or enjoy the beauty of the one or hate the foulness of the other. That is to say they are absolutely isolated and can never come in touch with human consciousness. He then says that out of such two worlds it would be rational to hold that it is better that the beautiful world should exist than the ugly one. It would be good to do whatever one could to produce the beautiful world and not to do the same thing for the other. But I see no reason to

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21. Ethics (Geoffrey Cumberlege: Oxford University Press, 1912, reprinted in 1952) pp. 37-38.



prefer one to the other. He feels so sure about the obligation to produce the beautiful world, because unknowingly he has smuggled into these two worlds unconscious beings and made the two worlds objects of human evaluation. He has done this by asking us to imagine one beautiful and one ugly world, one filled with all the things which we admire and the other filled with all that which we condemn. But had it not been so I do not see what would have been the rational basis for the preference of one world over the other. He, perhaps, realised this difficulty later on and so while writing 'A Reply to my critics' he finds himself hesitant to prefer one world to the other, when none of them has ever been or could ever be the object of human contemplation. In his own words: 'I think now that no state of affairs can be good, unless its existence entails the proposition that somebody is having some experience.'<sup>22</sup> Thus we find that no object which exists in absolute isolation could be judged good and so his claim that a thing is intrinsically good if it could be judged to be good even if it existed in absolute isolation does not seem to be tenable.

Arguing against the view that to assert that something is intrinsically good is merely to assert that we or somebody else is pleased with the thing in question, or it is or would be desired for its own sake, He says that

...a man certainly believes with regard to a given thing or state of things that the idea of it does please somebody, and is desired, and even desired for its own sake, and yet not believe that it would be at all worth while that it should exist, if it

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22. Schilpp, P.A. (ed.) The Philosophy of G.E. Moore, (Evanston and Chicago: North-Western University. 1942). p. 640



existed quite alone. . . . And if this is so, then it shows conclusively that to judge that a thing is intrinsically good is not the same thing as to judge that some man is pleased with it or desires it or desires it for its own sake.<sup>23</sup>

But he does not seem to be justified in taking this argument as conclusive. He believes this argument to be conclusive, because he holds a particular theory of value. But, if somebody holds that a value property emerges in an existential context and with the change of the context the value of a thing also changes, then he might be perfectly justified in holding that it would not be worth while for the thing to exist in absolute isolation, the thing which he desires for its own sake in a particular situation. With the change of the situation the thing may lose its positive value and in some other context may even acquire a negative value. He might legitimately believe that nothing has any value when it exists in absolute isolation from everything else- from even an evaluator.

In his essay on 'The Conception of Intrinsic Value' Moore presents an alternative formulation of his theory of intrinsic value. There he says:

To say that a kind of value is 'intrinsic' means merely that the question whether a thing possesses it, and in what degree it possesses it depends solely on the intrinsic nature of the thing in question.<sup>24</sup>

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23. Ethics (Geoffrey Cumberlege: Oxford University Press, 1912, reprinted in 1952) p. 402.

24. Philosophical Studies (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., Paperback 1960), p. 260.

He further explains what he means by the expression 'depends solely on the intrinsic nature of the thing in question' and points out that he means two things by it simultaneously.

- (1) that it is impossible for what is strictly one and the same thing to possess that kind of value at one time, or in one set of circumstances, and not to possess it at another; and equally impossible for it to possess it in one degree at one time, or in one set of circumstances, and to possess it in a different degree at another, or in a different set.... one and the same thing must always have the same intrinsic value. ...
- (2) The second part of what is meant is that if a thing possesses any kind of intrinsic value in a certain degree, then not only must that same thing possess it, under all circumstances, in the same degree, but also anything exactly like it must, under all circumstances, possess it in exactly the same degree. ... It is impossible that of two exactly similar things one should possess it and the other not, or that one should possess it in one degree and the other in a different one.<sup>25</sup>

Moore then points out that not all properties which depend on the intrinsic nature of a thing belong to the same class. He says that

... though both yellowness and beauty are predicates which depend only on the intrinsic nature of what possesses them, yet while yellowness is itself an intrinsic predicate, beauty is not. Indeed it seems to me to be one of the most important truths about predicates of value that though many of them are intrinsic kinds of value, in the sense I have defined, yet none of them are intrinsic properties, in the sense in which such properties as 'yellow' or the property of 'being a state of pleasure' or 'being a state of things which contains a balance of pleasure' are intrinsic properties.<sup>26</sup>

Thus he gives the impression that according to him non-value properties which depend on the intrinsic nature of a thing constitute its nature whereas intrinsic value-properties are consequential

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25. Ibid., pp. 260-61.

26. Ibid., p. 272.

involved in both the claims is unconditional, but in neither of them it is 'identical with the logical "must" '.<sup>30</sup> Moore says that 'it seems to me possible that this is the true explanation',<sup>31</sup>, but he fails to explain the nature of the two kinds of necessity which are involved here.

### Instrumentalist's Position

Dewey also makes the distinction between intrinsic value and value as means. But he parts company with Moore and all others who make a sharp separation between the two. He rather, criticises Moore for saying that an intrinsically good thing will remain so even if it existed quite alone, i.e., in absolute isolation from everything else. For, he believes that a thing acquires value only in existential contexts when somebody cares for it, prizes it, or makes an appraisal of it. Hence, in his view, a thing which would exist in absolute isolation will have no value at all. He says that ambiguity in the use of the words 'intrinsic' 'inherent' and 'immediate' misleads people into making the sharp separation between the intrinsic and instrumental values and asserting that intrinsic value is non-relational.

He agrees with Moore that a quality, including that of value, is inherent if it actually belongs to something. But the question whether or not it belongs to the thing in question is a question of fact and not one which can be decided

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30. Ibid., p. 275.

31. Ibid., p. 275.

by dilectical manipulation of the concept of inherence. If someone has a strong desire to obtain something to use it as a means, then the quality of value belongs to the object which the person wants to procure for using as means, since the procurement of the means is the end-in-view of the person at that moment. He further states that

The notion that only that which is out of relation to everything else can justly be called inherent is not only itself absurd but is contradicted by the very theory that connects the value of objects as ends with desire and interest, for this view expressly makes the value of the end-object relational, so that, if the inherent is identified with the non-relational, there are, according to this view, no inherent values at all.<sup>32</sup>

But if it is conceded that the object which is desired for being used as a means has the quality of value, then the relational character of means cannot be used as a ground for denying that their value is inherent. 'Relational properties do not lose their intrinsic quality of being just what they are because their coming into being is caused by something 'extrinsic'.<sup>33</sup> The rejection of this view would lead one to the view that no quality is intrinsic, 'since it can be shown that such intrinsic qualities, as red, sweet, hard, etc., are causally conditioned as to their occurrence.'<sup>34</sup> Dewey thinks that the trouble is that in many theories a dialectic of concepts has taken the place of the examination of actual empirical facts. One extreme

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32. Theory of Valuation (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1939, reprinted in 1965), p. 28.

33. Ibid., p. 28.

34. Ibid., p. 28.



example of neglecting empirical facts in favour of a dialectic of concepts is the view that to be intrinsic is to be out of any relation. This view is found in writers like Moore who hold that since values are intrinsic, they cannot depend on any relation whatever. Dewey considers the views of non-naturalistic school as a "definite exposure of what happens when an analysis of the abstract concept of "intrinsicness" is substituted for analysis of empirical occurrences."<sup>35</sup>

Dewey asserts that there is the continuum of ends-means, and the two, ends and means, cannot be sharply separated. Any effort to separate ends from means, he says, is bound to lead to some absurdity. To illustrate this point he recalls Charles Lamb's 'Dissertation on Roast Pig'. Lamb in this essay tells us that roast pork was enjoyed for the first time when a house, in which some pigs were confined, caught fire in an accident and was burnt down. While searching for the pigs, which were roasted, their owners happen to touch them and scorch their fingers. Impulsively they took their fingers to their mouths to cool them and experienced a new taste. They enjoyed the taste and from then, in order to get roast pork, they set themselves to building houses, enclosing pigs in them and setting the houses on fire. Dewey says that those who enjoyed reading this story perhaps did not realise that their enjoyment was due to the 'perception of the absurdity of any 'end'

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35. Ibid., p. 28.



which is set up apart from the means by which it is to be attained and apart from its own further function as means.<sup>36</sup> Had 'end' been entirely separate from means and had the valuation of end been completely independent of means, there would have been nothing absurd, nothing ridiculous, in the procedure which was adopted, in Lamb's essay, for the procurement of roast pork. For, in this case, the end attained was just the end desired, viz. the eating and enjoying the roast pork. It is only when the end achieved is evaluated and compared with the value of the means employed - building and burning down of houses in comparison with other available means by which the same end could have been accomplished- the method of attaining the end seems absurd or unreasonable. The value of the enjoyment of the end attained, in this case enjoyment of roast pork, is the value of something which in being an end, an outcome, stands in relation to the means - building houses and setting them on fire of which it is the consequence. Therefore, if an object is valued as an end, it is valued as an outcome of some means.

Dewey examines the maxim 'the end justifies the means', which seems to go against his thesis of the continuum of 'ends-means'. For if this maxim is invoked then the end, eating of roast pork, fully sanctions the price paid in burning dwelling houses and the sacrifice of the pigs. He also thinks that the notion 'involved in the maxim that "the end justifies the means"

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36. Ibid., p. 40.

is basically the same as that in the notion of ends-in-themselves, ... for only the conception that certain things are ends-in-themselves can warrant the belief that the relation of ends-means is unilateral, proceeding exclusively from end to means.<sup>37</sup>

And he says that 'an end-in-itself' is a 'self contradictory term in any case,'<sup>38</sup> for 'being an end' is a relation. Something which is called end is either the end, the cherished object, of somebody, or the result, the effect, of some means. As regards the maxim itself, he proclaims that it could be interpreted to mean either that (a) when an 'end' is selected and a means is used to obtain it, something miraculously prevents the means from producing its usual effects except the specially selected 'end', or (b) that in view of the value of the specially selected and prized end, all other effects of the means may be fully ignored and brushed aside no matter how harmful they are. Such arbitrary selection of any one of the various effects produced by the means as the means and hence permitting the use of the means, irrespective of the consideration how obnoxious its other effects are, is the result of accepting that it, the end, is an end-in-itself, and so possesses 'value' independently of its existential relations. But none of these interpretations of the maxim is compatible with facts. Nevertheless, what the maxim actually asserts is that a fragment of the effects on which the heart is set or which is desired, produced by the employment of a means, sanctions its use to obtain that desired fragment without taking into consideration the value of its other effects also. The

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37. Ibid., p. 42.

38. Ibid., p. 41.

maxim, Dewey says, 'thus discloses in a striking manner the fallacy involved in the position that ends have value independent of appraisal of means involved and independent of their own further causal efficacy.'<sup>39</sup>

In Dewey's opinion the distinction between ends and means is just temporal and relational.

The 'end' is merely a series of acts viewed at a remote state, and a means is merely the series viewed at an earlier one. The distinction of means and end arises in surveying the course of a proposed line of action, a connected series in time. The 'end' is the last act thought of, the means are the acts to be performed prior to it in time. To reach an end we must take our mind off from it and attend to the act which is next to be performed. We must make that the end.<sup>40</sup>

The only exception to the above statement, he says, is the series of actions which is determined by the habit of a person. The only thing required to get the series going is a stimulus to set it on. But the moment there is even the slightest deviation required for the attainment of the proposed end, the unaccustomed act is the 'end' to which all attention must be devoted.

He asserts that 'means and ends are two names for the same reality. The terms denote not a division in reality but a distinction in judgment. 'End' is a name for a series of acts taken collectively-like the term army. 'Means' is the name for the same series taken distributively - like this

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39. Ibid., pp. 42-43.

40. Human Nature and Conduct (New York, The Modern Library 1922, reprinted in 1957), p. 34.

soldier, that officer.'<sup>41</sup> In Dewey's opinion thinking of an end is an indicator of extension and enlargement of our view of the act which is to be performed. It signifies that the person is looking at the next thing in a perspective and is not allowing it to occupy the entire field of vision. 'To attain a remote end means on the other hand to treat the end as a series of means.'<sup>42</sup> The mere assertion that the thing is an end is equivalent to asserting that there are obstructions intervening between the object and the person who calls it his end. If it remains a distant end, then it becomes as good as a dream or a fantasy. Hence, the moment one fixes one's end, the person must begin working back in thought. He must 'change what is to be done into a how, the means whereby. The end thus reappears as a series of 'what nexts', and the what next of chief importance is the one nearest the present state of the one acting.'<sup>43</sup>

According to Dewey the conditions under which desires take shape and anticipated consequences are fixed as ends to be achieved are the those 'of need, deficit and conflict.'<sup>44</sup> The occasion of the evocation of a desire, he says, is always an experience of a tension between the environing conditions and the person. There is nothing else which can provide an opportunity for the formation of an end, much less the fixing of one rather than any other out of the various ends whose formation is

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41. *Ibid.*, p. 36.

42. *Ibid.*, p. 36.

43. *Ibid.*, p. 36.

44. *The Theory of Valuation* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1922).

theoretically possible. The observation of the requirements of the conditions of needs or privations guides the shaping of the active tendencies into a desire in which an end-in-view is blended. 'The "value" of different ends that suggests themselves is estimated or measured by the capacity they exhibit to guide action in making good, satisfying, in its literal sense, existing lacks.'<sup>45</sup> This is the factor which accelerates the process of weighing ends-in-view in their function as means.

Thus the valuation of an end-in-view is done on the basis of its efficacy as means of getting rid of the tension which we experience due to some need or privation. Dewey writes that ' "ends-in-view" are appraised or valued as good or bad on the ground of their serviceability in the direction of behaviour dealing with states of affairs found to be objectionable because of some lack or conflict in them.'<sup>46</sup>

Dewey, here, successfully rejects the distinction between 'value as end' and 'value as means' or 'intrinsic value' and 'instrumental value'. For, according to him all 'good' means 'good for', as a thing acquires value only when it becomes an anticipated, object of some body and he begins caring for it. All ends, in his view, are means to satisfy some want or desire of some conscious being whose ends they are.

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45. Ibid., p. 46.

46. Ibid., p. 47.



A.C. Garnett, however, does not agree with Dewey's rejection of the distinction between 'intrinsic' and 'instrumental' values. Although he concedes that Dewey is right in insisting on the illegitimacy of the separation of means from ends, yet he points out that the real question involved in the distinction of 'intrinsic' and 'instrumental' values is not

...whether the value of an end can be considered as such, apart from the means to its realization. It is rather the question whether present experience in its immediacy contains the distinction of good and bad apart from reference to its further consequences. ...If 'good' only means 'good for' then the answer is 'None'. But if 'good' and 'bad' are used to mark the distinction between the sort of experience we prize in the sense of seeking to maintain it, when present, then the answer is different. If it is the last moment of a man's experience (and thus has no consequence for him), it is better for him that it should be a moment of joy and content than one of pain and disappointment.

This latter sense of value (as an intrinsic character of immediate experience) is its most fundamental sense. For objective things only have value by reason of their effect upon the value content of subjective experience. The thing that we value as instrument, for what it does, we value for what it probably does to some immediate experience of future, as tending to create the sort of experience that is prized for what it is. It is in the analysis of immediate experience, therefore, that the final solution to every problem of evaluation is to be found.<sup>47</sup>

Here Garnett seems to be mistaken in emphasizing the analysis of immediate experience for the final solution of every problem of evaluation. He does this as a consequence of his belief that the most fundamental sense of value is an

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47. Ray Lepley (ed) Value: A Cooperative Inquiry (New York: Columbia University Press, 1949, reprinted in 1951), pp. 314-15.

'intrinsic character of immediate experience'. But had his belief about the fundamental sense of value been correct, then it would not have been the case that some things which are immediately experienced to be pleasant are judged as bad after their evaluation, while some others, which at first experience are found to be unpleasant are judged to be good. Secondly had he been correct on this point then, in an evaluation, a lay man's experience would have carried as much weight as an expert's in the field of his expertise. It is, however, a common experience that this is not the case.

This view has a further weakness of effacing the distinction between an ordinary experience and an evaluative experience. According to this view there would not be any distinction between a report of an ordinary experience in language, which would be a description of the psychological state of a mind and an expression of an evaluative experience, which would be a value judgment.

He seems to be mistaken also in interpreting Dewey as holding that only the consequences of the subject of the action, under evaluation, had to be taken into account in an evaluation. This is why he suggests that in the last moment of a man's experience when there cannot be any more consequence for him, it is better for him that it should be a moment of joy and content than of pain and disappointment. But Dewey clearly says that 'the final happiness of an individual

resides in the supremacy of certain interests in the make-up of character, namely alert, sincere, enduring interest in the objects in which all can share.<sup>48</sup> Thus Dewey would not agree that it would be better that the last moment of a man's experience should be a moment of joy and contentment simply because this experience would not have any consequence for him, and if it is likely to have bad consequence for others.

Thus we find that Garnett's grounds for criticising Dewey do not hold.

#### Emotivist's Position

Stevenson like Moore and Dewey, also recognises the two modes of speaking, i.e. the practice of speaking about intrinsic and extrinsic values of things. He uses the expression 'intrinsically good' as a rough synonym of 'good for its own sake, as an end, as distinct from good as a means to something else.' But unlike Moore or Dewey he relates the words 'intrinsic' and 'extrinsic' to attitudes. 'I approve of X intrinsically', according to him has the meaning of 'I approve of X when I disregard all of its consequences upon other objects of my attitudes.' And the expression 'I approve of X extrinsically' mean 'the consequences of X meet for most part with my approval, and so I approve of X when I consider

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48. John Dewey and James H. Tufts, Ethics (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1908, reprinted in 1961), p. 335.

it with exclusive regard to its consequences.'<sup>49</sup> He considers the above definitions of 'intrinsic' and 'extrinsic' to be quite general to the extent that these could also be used to explain these terms when they are used with 'disapprove' or any other term which designates an attitude, when 'approve' in the above definitions is uniformly replaced by 'disapprove' or other attitude designating expression. Thus we find that 'I disapprove of X intrinsically' means 'I disapprove of X when I disregard all its consequences upon other objects of my attitudes.' Similarly 'I disapprove of X extrinsically' means 'the consequences of X meet for most part with my disapproval, and so I disapprove of X when I consider it with exclusive regard to its consequences.'

He then says that the term 'intrinsically good' is used to influence the hearer to have an intrinsic attitude, similar to that of the speaker, and not to have any sort of favourable attitude. He is aware that 'this assumption is overly precise, in view of the rough influence that judgments have in daily life, it is convenient in suggesting that people do not agree on intrinsic value of something unless both approve of it intrinsically.'<sup>50</sup>

Following his first pattern of analysis, Stevenson says that the expression 'X is intrinsically good' asserts that 'the speaker approves of X intrinsically, and acts emotively

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49. Ethics and Language (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1945 reprinted in 1958), p. 177.

50. Ibid., p. 178.

to make the hearer or hearers likewise approve of it intrinsically. So, mutatis mutandis, for "extrinsically good", "intrinsically bad" and "extrinsically bad".<sup>51</sup> He also accepts the possibility of saying that something is good both intrinsically and extrinsically. If a man approves of X when he disregards its consequences, he may also approve of it when he regards its consequences. Thus his overall approval of X will be stronger than either intrinsic or extrinsic approval of it. Hence, calling a thing good both extrinsically and intrinsically only asserts the speaker's double approval of it, and his recommendation of it to the hearer. Stevenson also accepts the possibility of affirming that X is intrinsically good but bad extrinsically, or vice versa. He, further, sees the likelihood of an intrinsically good thing's being bad on the whole. In such cases the intrinsic approval of the thing may be outweighed by the disapproval of its consequences.

He says that 'intrinsically' and 'extrinsically' can be conveniently interchanged with 'as an end' and 'as a means' respectively. However, such an interchange of expressions goes fairly well with the common usage only so long as 'good' is in question. Such an interchange cannot be permitted in the contexts where 'bad' is involved. For 'bad as a means' suggests 'inefficient means' and 'bad as an end' suggests 'bad for others to take as an end' which are obviously not synonymous

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51. Ibid., p. 178.



with 'extrinsically' bad and 'intrinsically' bad respectively.

He also says that 'end' when used as short for 'that which is approved intrinsically' must be distinguished from 'focal aim', used in the sense of 'that which predominates one's conscious attention'. For, a 'focal aim' may be an 'end' in the present sense, but it does not have to be. It may predominate one's consciousness just to be used for some other ends.

Like Dewey, he also believes that there cannot be an absolute separation between an 'end' and a 'means'. He argues extensively against the specialist's conception of ethical method which believes that judgments of intrinsic value could be established independently of the consideration of the value of the object considered as a means. He says that people who accept the specialist's conception of ethical methodology makes two assumptions tacitly, viz. an agreement on intrinsic value (1) is presupposed by, and (2) does not itself presuppose, any other type of ethical agreement. But neither of these presuppositions seems to be tenable to Stevenson.

In order to examine the first assumption, he classifies all possible agreements in attitudes into four 'basic types', on the principle whether the attitudes in question are intrinsic or extrinsic.

Type I: A and B approve of X intrinsically.

Type II: A and B approve of Y intrinsically and if both believe

that X leads to Y then both will accept that X is good extrinsically.

Type III: A approves of X as an end and B though indifferent to intrinsic goodness of X believes that it is a means to Y which he approves intrinsically. Thus even without agreeing on the intrinsic value of X, they may have a general agreement that X is good. He calls such an approval of X 'diverse agreement on value of X.'

Type IV: A approves of Y intrinsically and B approves of Z intrinsically but is indifferent to Y. Now, if both of them believe that X leads to Y and Z respectively, then both of them may approve of X extrinsically irrespective of their agreement on intrinsic value. In short we can say that this is a case of agreement on extrinsic value of X independent of the agreement on its intrinsic value.

Stevenson says that a similar classification holds good of agreement on what is bad; with the necessary changes in the statement of the four types of agreements in attitudes, it could conveniently be transformed into four types of 'negative' agreement.

Now he says that had all agreements been only of the type I and II, the assumption that agreement on ends is presupposed by every other sort of ethical agreement would hold

true. But, when types III and IV are recognised we find it difficult to accept assumption (1). In either of these types ethical agreement may be had without reaching an agreement on ends. A's ends may be B's means, or A and B both may accept X as means but for different ends to which X leads. He says that 'although no one person can approve of anything as a means without approving of something else as an end, it remains possible for people to agree in approving of something without agreeing on ends.'<sup>52</sup> Thus we find that agreement of type I is not a precondition for achieving an agreement of type III or type IV. In other words, agreement on intrinsic value is not an indispensable step in securing ethical agreement of any other sort.

Stevenson, then, goes to examine assumption (2), viz. agreement on intrinsic value does not itself presuppose any other type of ethical agreement. This assumption, he says, at first look seems indispensable. Whenever people seek an agreement on intrinsic value (type I), the question relating to its means seems extraneous to the issue. The agreement on intrinsic value may, of course, be reinforced by agreement on the means to be used. But this simply shows that people may go beyond the agreements of type I and have other types of agreements.

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52. Ibid., p. 183.

He further concedes that 'so far assumption (2) points out logical possibility, it is indeed unassailable.'<sup>53</sup> We can imagine a world where ends can be determined without taking into consideration the means to achieve it. But unless a possibility is actualized, it cannot be of any practical interest to us. So, if this assumption is to be of any advantage to the specialist's ethics, it must be accepted that people who seek agreement on intrinsic value do not in fact take into consideration the means of securing it. But in this sense this assumption turns out to be unacceptable to Stevenson.

He rejects this assumption on the following grounds. He first draws our attention to the fact that intrinsic attitudes are not an unalterable part of human nature. They are not determined by the genes of the individual concerned. Nevertheless, he admits that men have some hereditary dispositions to acquire certain attitudes, but he asserts that the actual development of them depends upon many environmental factors. The very fact that moralists succeed in their effort to alter intrinsic attitudes of men proves that some extraneous factors play a role in determining intrinsic attitudes.

Out of those extraneous factors Stevenson singles out habituation-sheer 'getting used to' something. He says that if a person approves of anything repeatedly in a particular circumstances, he forms the habit of approving it, which gets

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53. Ibid., p. 192.

fixed and continues even after the change of the circumstances. If a person has to struggle to acquire anything many times, no matter why, he forms a habit of striving for it and will be inclined more and more to take it as an end in itself. He says that 'extrinsic approval comes progressively to be reinforced by intrinsic approval, as a part of the general adaptability of human nature. In brief: what is first favoured as a means may on that very account grow to be favoured as an end.'<sup>54</sup> These facts clearly falsify assumption (2).

His main purpose in presenting the above analysis of 'intrinsically' and 'extrinsically' good seems to be to reject the specialist's view of ethics. Although he has amply succeeded in rejecting this view of ethics by rejecting both of its presuppositions successfully, yet I fail to agree with one of his arguments which he presents in order to reject the presupposition that an agreement on the intrinsic value is presupposed by any other type of ethical agreement. His rejection of this presupposition on the ground of the possibility of a divergent agreement on the value of an object, which he illustrates in the agreement of type III is quite convincing. But his argument on the basis of the agreement of type IV fails to carry conviction. Here he says that A and B may approve of X as a means, even if A approves of Y as an end, while B approves of Z as an end and if they believe, respectively, that X leads to Y and to Z. Now 'A approves of

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54. Ibid., p. 193.



X as a means 'abbreviates' A approves of X as a means to Y' and similarly 'B approves of X as a means' abbreviates 'B approves of X as a means to Z.' Hence, A approves of one relational property of X viz., 'being a means to Y' and B approves of its other relational property viz. 'being a means to Z' when they approve of X as a means. Thus I fail to locate the element, which both A and B approve of when they are said to approve of X as a means. I, therefore, feel that the expression 'Both A and B approve of X as a means' when they do not approve of X as a means to the same common end, conceals the fact more than reveals it.

I have another minor point of difference with Stevenson. He maintains a distinction between an 'end' and a 'focal aim'. A focal aim, he says, is something 'valued partly as an end, perhaps, but largely as an indispensable means to a multitude of other ends.'<sup>55</sup> He then complains<sup>56</sup> that Dewey does not make a clear distinction between an end and a 'focal' end. But if he pays attention to the graphic details, which Dewey has given,<sup>57</sup> of the circumstances in which an end emerges, he will be satisfied that there does not exist any distinction between an 'end' and a 'focal' end. Dewey says that every end is fixed in a situation in which there is some 'trouble'. When this situation is analysed, the trouble is found to spring from the fact that there is something lacking, wanting. It is in order to get rid of this tension arising from the situation that an end is projected.

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55. Ibid., p. 330.

56. Ibid., p. 201 (In a footnote)

57. Theory of Valuation (London: The University of Chicago Press, 1936)

Thus every end in its ultimate analysis turns out to be a means to remove a tension arising from an existing situation. If this analysis of the situation in which an end is projected is correct then how can Stevenson himself maintain a clear distinction between an 'end' and a 'focal end'? For every thing which we approve of as an end, on ultimate analysis turns out to be a means of getting rid of the tension involved in some existing situation.

Here I find myself in agreement with both Dewey and Stevenson in holding that the distinction between 'intrinsic' and 'instrumental' values cannot be taken as absolute. The distinction only expresses the focus of attention of the evaluator at the time of the evaluation. When an evaluator pays attention to the object of evaluation only and not to its consequences, then his judgment is called the judgment of intrinsic value. On the other hand, if he pays attention to its consequences also then his judgment about its value is called the judgment of instrumental value or value as a means.

## CHAPTER IV

### MORAL ARGUMENT

#### The Nature of Reasoning

An argument is a group of statement of which one is claimed to be supported by the others. The statement which is claimed to be supported by the evidence is called the conclusion and the supporting statements premises. Benson Mates says that 'by an argument we mean a system of declarative sentences (of a single language), one of which is designated as the conclusion and the others as premises.'<sup>1</sup> But, unless some evidence is given to support a statement, we do not have an argument.

The word 'argument' is used in ordinary language in many senses. Sometimes it is used to refer to some dispute and at some other time it is used to denote the process of inferring a conclusion. But in logic it is used in neither of these senses. Logicians use it to refer to the group of statements related in such a way that one of them is the conclusion and the rest the premises. Nevertheless, an intelligent disputation does involve argument in the logical sense. Disagreement provides an opportunity to bring evidences in support of one's views, if he wants a rational solution of it.

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1. Elementary Logic (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 3.

But an argument can be given to justify a conclusion irrespective of whether or not there is explicit disagreement.

An argument is often designed to convince the listener or the reader. This is one of its important and legitimate functions. But logicians are not concerned with the persuasive power of arguments. For, many times logically faulty arguments succeed in convincing people while logically correct arguments fail to persuade and secure agreement. Logicians, therefore, are concerned primarily with the nature of the objective relation which holds between the premises and the conclusion. The correctness or incorrectness of an argument does not depend, in the opinion of logicians, upon its capability to secure agreement or on its persuasive power. An argument may be correct even if no body recognises it to be so; or it may be logically incorrect even if it succeeds in convincing people. Therefore, an argument is defined as 'any group of propositions of which one is claimed to follow from the others, which are regarded as providing evidence for the truth of that one.'<sup>2</sup>

In an argument the premises are said to provide an evidence for the truth of the conclusion. Presenting an evidence in the premise for the conclusion involves two aspects. One, the premises are statements of fact. Two, these facts are offered as evidence for the truth of the

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2. I.M.Copi, Introduction to Logic (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1961, reprinted in 1963), p. 7.

conclusion. Hence there are two ways in which the premises may not succeed in providing an evidence for the truth of the conclusion. One, one or more of the premises may be false. In this case the supposed facts turn out not to be facts at all; thus the alleged evidence for the conclusion does not exist at all. Two, the premises as presented may be statements of facts or, in other words, may be true, yet not be relevant for proving or disproving the truth of the conclusion. Thus, in an argument although the premises are true they may fail to provide evidence for the truth of the conclusion. Hence, for the premises to succeed in providing evidence for the truth of the conclusion it is necessary that they be true statements of facts and be properly relevant to the conclusion.

The logical correctness or incorrectness of an argument depends completely upon the relation between its premises and conclusion. In a logically correct argument, if the premises were true this would constitute a conclusive ground for accepting the conclusion as true. W.C. Salmon says that 'the premises of an argument support the conclusion if the truth of the premises would constitute good reason for asserting that the conclusion is true.'<sup>3</sup> But, when the premises of an argument are said to support the conclusion, it is not claimed that the premises are true or they state facts; rather

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3. Logic (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall Inc., 1963), p. 4.



it is only claimed that if the premises were true, they would provide good evidence for the truth of the conclusion. In a logically incorrect argument the premises do not provide evidence for the truth of the conclusion, even when they state facts.

Since the logical correctness or incorrectness of an argument depends completely upon the nature of the relation that holds between the premises and the conclusion, the validity of an argument is, wholly independent of the content of the premises. One can, therefore, analyse and evaluate an argument merely by assuming the truth of the premises and without knowing their actual truth value. One has simply to find out whether or not the assumed truth of the premises provides sufficient ground for holding the conclusion as true.

Arguments are traditionally divided into two different types viz., deductive and inductive. While in every argument it is claimed that the premises provide an evidence for the truth of the conclusion, it is only in deductive arguments that the premises are claimed as presenting a conclusive proof for the truth of the conclusion. An inductive argument, on the other hand, makes a very moderate claim about the type of evidence which its premises provide for the truth of the conclusion. In an inductive argument the premises are said to provide only some evidence for the truth of the conclusion and not conclusive evidence.

In the technical vocabulary of logic, the logically correct and incorrect deductive argument is called 'valid' and 'invalid' respectively. But, inductive arguments are not called valid or invalid, rather they are evaluated as better or worse, or, proper or improper. A deductive argument is valid if, and only if, it is impossible for its premises to be true and its conclusion false. In all other cases the argument is invalid. Inductive arguments are evaluated as better or worse depending upon the likelihood or probability which their premises confer upon their conclusions.

There are two fundamental characteristics which distinguish deductive from inductive arguments. One, the conclusion of a deductive argument is never more general than its premises. It is sometimes also said that in a valid deductive argument the information or the factual content of the conclusion is already contained, at least implicitly in the premises. But, in an inductive argument, on the other hand, the conclusion is always more general than its premises. Here the information content of the conclusion is not present in its premises even implicitly. The second characteristic is a corollary of the first one discussed above. In a valid deductive argument if all its premises are true, the conclusion must also be true. While in a proper inductive argument, if all the premises are true the conclusion is only probably true but not necessarily true.

Now, having discussed the nature of reasoning in general, and the nature of deductive and inductive arguments in particular, we will proceed to examine the nature of ethical arguments. Here we will try to find out whether ethical arguments may be accommodated in either of the two existing division of arguments, viz., deductive and inductive, or they form a separate class by themselves.

#### Moore: The Deductive Approach

G.E. Moore has taken keen interest in the role and nature of reasoning in moral discourse. One of the main objectives of Moore in his 'Principia Ethica' has been to inquire into the nature of ethical reasoning. In the preface of this book he clearly states 'I have endeavoured to discover what are the fundamental principles of ethical reasoning; and the establishment of these principles, rather than any conclusions which may be attained by their use, may be regarded as my main object.'<sup>4</sup> He thinks that the nature of ethical reasoning is the same as non-ethical reasoning. Here also the relation between premises and the conclusion is logical. His views on ethical reasoning are the direct consequences of his notion of ethical language. He believes that ethical utterances are cognitive in nature, that is to say, their primary function is to convey information. So, whenever an ethical judgment is disputed either tacitly or explicitly, or whenever there is a need to support such a judgment, the evidence is directed towards the establishment of the

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4. Principia Ethica (First paperback edition, Cambridge: At the University Press, 1959), p. IX.

truth-claim of the judgment. Thus we find that the primary function of ethical reasoning, in Moore's scheme, is either to prove or disprove some ethical proposition or, either to confirm or to render it doubtful.

He divides all ethical judgments into two kinds. He calls the judgments of the first class judgments of intrinsic value, and the judgments of the second class judgments of value as means. He says that judgments involving the terms right or duty fall in the second class. He maintains that the fundamental principles of ethics or the judgments of intrinsic value are incapable of proof or disproof. For, no evidence can be given in support of a judgment of intrinsic value. From no other truth, except itself alone it can be inferred that a judgment of intrinsic value is either true or false. He maintains that a judgment of this class is selfevident, that is to say, it must either be accepted as true or rejected as false on its own evidence and cannot be inferred from any other proposition. He calls these judgments 'intuitions' and explains that 'when I call such propositions 'Intuitions', I mean merely to assert that they are incapable of proof; I imply nothing whatever as to the manner or origin of our cognition of them.'<sup>5</sup>

Moore, however, believes that propositions of the second class are capable of proof or disproof. He says that evidence could be provided in support of such propositions, nonetheless

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5. Ibid., p. X.

he is aware of the difficulties involved in presenting such evidence. He tells us that

such evidences must contain propositions of two kinds and of two kinds only: it must consist, in the first place of truths with regard to the result of the action in question - of causal truths - but it must also contain ethical truths of our first or self-evident class. Many truths of both kinds are necessary to the proof that any action ought to be done; and any other kind of evidence is wholly irrelevant.<sup>6</sup>

He uses 'right' to denote what is good as a means. He clearly writes that 'this use of "right" as denoting what is good as a means, ... is indeed the use to which I shall confine the word.'<sup>7</sup> He holds that in judging a thing good as a means or right or duty two kinds of judgments are involved at a time. Of them one is a causal judgment, that is, the thing judged is judged as one which produces or is likely to produce some effect, and the other is an evaluative judgment in which it is judged that the effect produced by the thing is intrinsically good. Hence, while giving reasons for such judgments, viz., judgments of good as a means, one will have to provide propositions of both these kinds.

From the above account of his views, it seems that he holds a deductive model for ethical reasoning. If some one has to prove the proposition 'X is right' in consonance with Moore's views of ethical reasoning, he will argue in the following way:

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6. Ibid., p. IX.

7. Ibid., p. 18.



X causes Y

Y is intrinsically good

Therefore, X is right.

and his proof will be complete, although one premise viz. 'whatever causes intrinsically good effect is right' seems to be missing. But this premise need not be explicitly mentioned, as Moore believes that this is what 'right' means. Here we find that the first premise is a causal proposition, the second is an intrinsic value proposition. Both these premises are fully in accord with Moore's account of the kinds of premises required in ethical reasoning. There is no information contained in the conclusion which is not contained in the premises. If some one accepted these premises to be true then he would also accept the conclusion to be true or else he will be misusing language or contradicting himself. Hence the argument is valid. Thus we find that the pattern of reasoning is deductive.

However, I find some difficulty in presenting evidence in support of judgments of duty in accordance with Moore's views about the class of propositions which can be used as premises in an ethical argument. He tells us that in any ethical argument two and only two kinds of propositions viz. 'truths with regard to the results of the action in question- of causal truths' and 'ethical truths of our first or self evident class' should be used as premises. But, in giving

evidence for the proposition 'X is my duty in the circumstances C', if I use as premises propositions of only two types, as prescribed by Moore, the premises will fail to support the conclusion. If I abide by his prescription I shall use only the following propositions in the premise:

1. X causes a,
2. Y causes b,
3. Z causes c,
4. a is intrinsically good,
5. b is intrinsically good,
6. c is intrinsically good,

where X, Y and Z stand for different possible actions in a particular situation and a, b and c stand for their effects respectively. But from this set of premises the conclusion 'X is my duty in the circumstance C' cannot follow. For, Moore defines 'duty' 'as that action, which will cause more good to exist in the universe than any possible alternative,'<sup>8</sup> and there is no mention in the premises that X, Y and Z are the only possible actions in the circumstances C and that 'a' has more intrinsic goodness than either 'b' or 'c'. Hence in order that the premises fully support the conclusion I must add two more propositions as premises, none of which belongs to either of the two kinds of propositions suggested by Moore for being used as premises in any ethical argument. They are

7. In the circumstance C only three actions, viz., X, Y and Z are possible actions for me, and

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8. Ibid., p. 148.

8. 'a' has a greater amount of intrinsic goodness than  
b or c.

Here I find myself in a dilemma. If I leave the 7th and 8th premises, then the rest of the premises fail to support the conclusion, and if I retain them in the list of premises, then I have two propositions in the list of the premises which do not belong to either kinds of propositions which Moore permits for such use.

There seems to be another difficulty in putting Moore's theory of ethical reasoning into practice. According to Moore, while arguing for the proposition 'x' is my duty in the circumstance C' it is essential to state, in one of the premises, that the effect which X produces has a greater amount of intrinsic goodness than the amount of intrinsic goodness which any other course of possible action in the circumstances can cause to exist; that is, a proposition like the premise 8th, in the above example, is necessary. But for making a judgment like this we must have a method for measuring the quantity of the intrinsic goodness. But, Moore does not give us any such method. And in the absence of such a method of measurement of intrinsic value, it becomes practically impossible to argue for or against any judgment of duty.

Further, Moore in denying the scope of argument with regard to the judgments of intrinsic value seems to rob ethics of its rational character, which he claims to be so eager to

protect. He prescribes the method of isolation for deciding whether or not a particular object possesses intrinsic value. But in our last chapter, where we examined this method, we found that it miserably fails when it is put to use. He has not suggested any alternative method for our benefit in judging whether or not a thing possesses intrinsic value. Thus, in case of a disagreement about the intrinsic value of an object, we are left with no adequate method of dissolving our disagreement and finding out whose, if any one of the contestant's, judgment is correct.

Hence we conclude that in denying the scope of argument concerning judgments of intrinsic value he has, in effect, denied the scope of argument on all ethical matters. Even where he has conceded the possibility of an argument, he has put such a condition which seems to be an impossible task to fulfil. Here, I have in mind his condition that at least one of the premises must be a judgment of intrinsic value. But in the absence of any adequate method of formulating such a value judgment, one can either assert such a judgment dogmatically or not assert it at all. However in either case this would vitiate ethical reasoning.

#### Dewey: The Pragmatic Approach

Dewey has not presented his theory of moral arguments at any one place in detail as Stevenson has done. But he has written enough at different places from which his theory

of ethical reasoning can be reconstructed. In presenting his theory of ethical arguments two things seem to be of primary importance - his scientific outlook and his view of the nature of value-judgments. Consistent with his general outlook he proposes to put ethics, also, on a scientific footing. Hence, as Frankena very aptly puts it,

No genuine valuation, on Dewey's program, is to be verifiable simply by looking to see if the object or action is desired, pleasant, or satisfying, as other empirical theories of value have allowed, or by looking to custom, authority, revelation, ontology, etc., as so many other views have insisted. Every judgment is to be made on the basis of the best available knowledge from the experimental sciences, and is to be regarded as corrigible in the light of further knowledge from such sources.<sup>9</sup>

Dewey maintains that even our most basic principles about ends are not to be taken as ultimate, fixed, arbitrary, irrational, or self-evident. They can and should be interpreted as rooted in and justifiable by experience organised scientifically. This can only be done if normative judgment can be inferred from factual judgments. Hence Dewey holds that moral judgments can be inferred from factual premises.

In order to appreciate Dewey's view of ethical reasoning it is essential to have a look at his theory of value-judgment. He recognises two uses of the expression 'to value' and says that it is used to indicate two radically different activities - to prize and to appraise, to esteem and to estimate. He holds that

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9. R.M. Chisholm, Herbert Feigl, W.K. Frankena, John Passmore and M. Thompson - Philosophy (Englewood Cliffs New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc. 1965) pp. 377-78.



statements of esteeming or prizing are not value-judgments in any distinctive sense, because they are statements of matter-of-fact. Referring to prizings and esteemings he says that 'the fact that these occurrences happen to be valuations does not make the propositions valuation propositions in any distinctive sense.'<sup>10</sup> For him value-judgments in their distinctive sense are evaluative. As long as an act of enjoying is taken in isolation we have no real judgment of value, because it is a description of an accomplished fact. But the moment we begin to view a particular enjoyment in relation to other enjoyments and begin to think whether we would enjoy the 'enjoyed' again if it occurs in future, an appraisal of enjoyment begins and a judgment of value follows. The appraisal of an enjoyment is done by taking into consideration the conditions and the consequences of the enjoyed in its past occurrences. Such a consideration results in a judgment that the enjoyment of one occasion is better than the enjoyment of another. Such judgments evaluate enjoyments and may also modify the direct act of further enjoying. He, therefore, says,

A value, in short, means a consideration, and a consideration does not mean an existence merely, but an existence having a claim upon judgment. Value judged is not existential quality noted, but is the influence attached by judgment to a given existential quality in determining judgment.<sup>11</sup>

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10. John Dewey, Theory of Valuation (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1939, reprinted in 1965), p. 19.

11. Essays in Experimental Logic (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1916 ) p. 364.

A value judgment, according to him, is predictive in nature. It states a rule for determination of an act to be performed. But,

The future act or state is not set forth as a prediction of what will happen but as something which shall or should happen. Thus the proposition may be said to lay down a norm, but 'norm' must be understood simply in the sense of a condition to be conformed to in definite forms of future-action.<sup>12</sup>

He holds that 'a judgment of value is simply a case of practical judgment, a judgment about the doing of something'.<sup>13</sup> It is a judgment concerning the future termination of an incomplete and so far indeterminate situation.

According to him a practical judgment is binary in nature.

It is a judgment that the given is to be treated in a specified way; it is also a judgment that the given admits of such treatment, that it admits of a specified objective termination. It is a judgment, at the same stroke, of end - the result to be brought about - and of means.<sup>14</sup>

A judgment of value implies that the given element of the situation should be completed in a specific way and also that it affords the conditions which make the proposed completion practicable.

According to Dewey all evaluations and reasonings are carried on in living situations. Hence value judgments are to be inferred from the facts of the situations. If a person is ill, and he wants to recover from his illness as soon as possible,

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12. John Dewey, Theory of Valuation (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1939, reprinted in 1965), p. 21.

13. Essays in Experimental Logic (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1916), p. 358.

14. Ibid., p. 340.

knows that consulting a doctor and taking medicines prescribed by him is the means of achieving his end in view, has sufficient money to pay the doctor's fee and to meet the cost of the medicines prescribed, then from all this he can infer that he should see a doctor. If he has fallen ill in the past also and has consulted a particular doctor and has found that his medicines helped him in recovering soon, then he would infer that he should see the same doctor.

We, thus, find that according to him value judgments are prescriptions and recommendations rooted in our interests and needs. Our ends are formed by the consideration of what we believe about the world and what we find in our experience to be satisfying when our ends and evaluations are based on correct information about these factors. They are justified or well-grounded. But, where the available information about these factors is incorrect, science and experience may enforce a revision in our ends and so in our evaluations.

Richard B. Brandt, in his Ethical Theory, has criticised what he calls contextualism which, according to him, is 'a theory of the proper role of science in ethical reflection that is quite similar to, if not identical with, the theory of John Dewey and other "instrumentalists"'.<sup>15</sup> He has here

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15. Ethical Theory (Englewood Cliffs, Prentice-Hall Inc., 1959), p. 45.

raised certain problems and claimed that contextualists have no satisfactory answer to these problems. Because of his claim regarding the close similarity of contextualism with Dewey's theory, I shall examine those problems and shall see whether or not Dewey's theory can answer his questions.

However, before proceeding to examine those problems, I shall point out some important points of difference between Dewey's theory of ethical reasoning and that of 'contextualism'. Dewey agrees with the 'contextualists' on the point that ethical disputes arise in some living situations. But unlike them he says that the situation is a continuum and not a context. This he does in order to indicate that the context in which the dispute takes place is not cut out from its connections with the past situations and has connections with situations of the future. Hence although he agrees with the 'contextualists' that the solution of an ethical problem is not sought in an abstraction he differs from them in so far as he is in favour of looking for the solution in the continuum and not merely in the context.

Another point of difference between the two theories is that according to the contextualists every ethical argument must start with an ethical premise, but for Dewey it is not necessarily so. In 'contextualists' scheme all ethical reasoning is deductive in form whereas in Dewey's theory it does not have to be deductive. On his theory one may infer an ethical

judgment from merely empirical premises and the inference may be neither deductive nor inductive in nature.

Having pointed out the main points of difference between 'contextualism' and Dewey's theory, let us now examine Brandt's objections against 'contextualism', which he seems to think, also hold against Dewey's theory. Brandt's first objection against 'contextualism' is that 'it does not show us why we should regard any ethical belief as justified at all.'<sup>16</sup> He says that according to this theory we start our ethical reasoning 'merely from undoubted premises, from our premises.'<sup>17</sup> Hence the conclusion that we arrive at is not justified. It is simply such that it cannot be rejected as long as the premises remain unquestioned. This theory no doubt, allows us to go back and examine the premises so that we be sure that the conclusion arrive at is justified. But for being fully satisfied that even one such conclusion is justified we will have to go step by step to examine all ethical judgments that are available to us for being used as premises. But, in this scheme, for being satisfied that even one such conclusion is justified we will have to be satisfied that the premises from which this conclusion is derived is justified. Since in the premises there will be two types of judgments - ethical and factual -

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16. Ibid., p. 46.

17. Ibid., p. 46.



the same process will be adopted for the justification of the ethical premise. Hence for justifying the ethical premise we will construct another argument with the help of another unquestioned ethical premise. And in turn in order to justify the ethical premise of this argument we will again construct an other argument. This process will continue unless we exhaust all our unquestioned ethical principles. And in the end we will reach a stage where we will not have any other unquestioned ethical principle for justifying that premise on the basis of which we have justified all other ethical principles, in our effort of satisfying ourselves that the premise of the first conclusion was justified. Thus in the absence of a premise to justify such an ethical principle, on which all other ethical principles depend for their justification, this theory fails to justify any ethical judgment.

But this objection does not hold good against Dewey's theory. He has prescribed a method of justifying ethical principles where deductive justification is not possible. He has indicated that taking into consideration our want in the continuum and the means indicated by science of fulfilling it, we can infer ethical judgments, which no intelligent person would object to. In such cases ethical judgments are not inferred from simply undoubted premises or our premises, but true premises. If some body has doubts about the truth of the premises then he can verify the truth of the premises by the scientific

means of testing the truth of those premises. Thus I find that in Dewey's theory there are ways of satisfying people that the ethical principle in dispute is or is not justified.

Brandt's second objection to 'contextualism' is that an appeal to science cannot establish a novel ethical principle. He elaborates this point by asking if some one is a hedonist in ethics then can he justify a novel principle: 'Thinking true thoughts is better in itself than thinking false one,' - or, for short, 'Knowledge is worthwhile in itself?' He says that what a contextualist can do at the most is to show that knowledge is worthwhile as a means, in the following way:

Premise: Something is worthwhile in itself if and only if it is pleasant experience.

Premise (from Science): Having knowledge is apt to produce pleasant experience in such-and-such ways.

Conclusion: Having knowledge is apt to produce what is worthwhile in itself.

Further conclusion: Having knowledge is instrumentally worthwhile, that is, worth seeking in view of its probable effects.

However, he cannot prove that knowledge is worthwhile in itself, he can only prove that having knowledge is instrumentally worthwhile.

But this objection also fails to stand against Dewey's theory. We have already seen, in the last chapter, that Dewey

convincingly rejects the sharp distinction between an intrinsic and an instrumental value. According to him all 'good' means 'good for'. Thus Brandt's objection that a contextualist can at most justify an instrumental value and not an intrinsic one does not retain much relevance for Dewey's theory.

### Stevenson: The Persuasive Approach

Stevenson has discussed in detail the ethical arguments, and has presented a theory of ethical reasoning. He has examined the nature of ethical reasoning afresh and in keeping with the current trends of thought has sought to give a perspective from a study of language and meaning.

He begins his inquiry into the nature of ethical reasoning by first analysing the nature of ethical agreement and disagreement. For the sake of simplicity he limits his attention to disagreement treating the positive term by implication. He makes a distinction between disagreement in belief and disagreement in attitude. The disagreements that occur in Science, History, Biography and their counterpart in everyday life constitute disagreements in belief. In such disagreements one person believes in a proposition  $p$ , while another person believes in not- $p$  or some other proposition which is incompatible with  $p$ ; that is, in such disagreements the opposition is formal. In such cases, in the course of discussion each one tries to present some proof for his views or revise his views in the light of further information. But, when two persons have opposed attitudes to the same object - one approving of it, for instance, and the other

disapproving of it - they have disagreement in attitude. An opposition of purposes, aspirations, wants, preferences, desires and the like constitute a disagreement in attitude. When two persons disagree in attitude at least one of them has a motive for altering or calling into question the attitude of the other. Stevenson says,

when one man is seeking to alter another's attitudes, he may at the same time be preparing to alter his own attitudes in the light of what the other may say. Disagreement in attitude, like disagreement in belief, need not be an occasion for forensic rivalry; it may be an occasion for an interchange of aims, with a reciprocal influence that both parties find to be beneficial.<sup>18</sup>

In short, in a disagreement in belief the disagreement is about how matters are truthfully to be described and explained, while in a disagreement in attitude it is about how they are to be favoured or disfavoured, and therefore, how they are to be shaped by human effort.

As regards the relationship between the two sorts of disagreements, it will be false to hold that every argument represents one type of disagreement to the exclusion of the other. Stevenson says that our beliefs and attitudes must not be compartmentalised. Actually our beliefs and attitudes affect each other. There is a close relationship between them. In arguments we usually find disagreement of both types. He says that our attitudes influence our beliefs 'not only by causing

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18. Ethics and Language (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1945, reprinted in 1958), p. 4.

us to indulge in wishful thinking, but also by leading us to develop and check such beliefs as point out the means of getting what we want.'<sup>19</sup> Our beliefs also affect our attitudes quite often, for 'we may alter our form of approval of something when we change our beliefs about its nature.'<sup>20</sup>

But from these facts one must not hasten to infer that there cannot be a disagreement in attitude without there being a disagreement in belief or vice-versa. It is possible that persons may have common ideals and aims which direct their scientific theorizing for example, and yet they reach divergent beliefs. Similarly, there may also be divergent attitudes without there being divergent beliefs. Stevenson, therefore, says that 'the relationship between the two sorts of disagreement, whenever it occurs, is always factual, never logical.'<sup>21</sup>

Ethical disagreements, he maintains, are of dual nature.

He says,

There is almost inevitably disagreement in belief, which requires detailed, sensitive attention; but there is also disagreement in a attitude. An analysis which seeks a full picture of ethics, in touch with practice, must be careful to recognise both factors, neither emphasizing the former to the exclusion of the latter, nor the latter to the exclusion of the former.<sup>22</sup>

Usually our beliefs do influence our views on ethical problems. An object for its proper evaluation must be viewed in its

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19. Ibid., p. 5.

20. Ibid., p. 5.

21. Ibid., p. 6.

22. Ibid., p. 11.



living factual context. Hence, the disagreement in belief about this context, which affects our evaluation of the object, turns out to be an important source of ethical controversy. But, it should not lead us to think that ethical disagreement has its origin exclusively in some disagreement in belief. For a moral controversy, a disagreement in belief must also be accompanied by a disagreement in attitude. For Stevenson thinks that 'it is disagreement in attitude, which imposes a characteristic type or organization on the beliefs that may serve indirectly to resolve it, that chiefly distinguishes ethical issues from those of pure science.'<sup>23</sup> In normative ethics description of a fact is 'attended by consideration of what is to be felt and done about it; the beliefs that are in question are preparatory to guiding or redirecting attitudes.'<sup>24</sup> Moral judgments, he holds recommend something for approval or disapproval. Hence, disagreement in attitude plays a very vital role in ethical reasoning. It gives the argument its fundamental unity and motivation. According to him it specifies the beliefs which are relevant for the discussion and which are to be examined; it also determines as to when the argument will terminate. Hence he concludes that a 'disagreement in attitude pervades the whole argument; and the beliefs that enter, whether or not they are about attitudes, become relevant because they are likely to alter the attitudes of the parties who are arguing.'<sup>25</sup>

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23. Ibid., p. 13.

24. Ibid., p. 13.

25. Ibid., p. 15.

Another factor, which has played an important role in shaping Stevenson's views on ethical argument, is his theory of language. Broadly speaking, he recognises two different purposes for which language is used. He says that the one set of functions which language is used to perform is to record, clarify, and communicate beliefs, as is done in science. And, the other set of functions which it is used to perform is to give vent to our feelings (interjections), to create moods (poetry), to incite people to action or attitudes (oratory), etc. He calls the first-kind of use of language 'descriptive' and the second kind 'dynamic'.<sup>26</sup> We have already seen that he recognizes a distinction between two kinds of meanings, viz., descriptive and emotive. He says that in the descriptive use of expressions, their descriptive meaning is primary and in their dynamic use, their emotive meaning becomes primary. Thus, the descriptive and dynamic uses of language are concerned with descriptive and emotive meanings respectively. But, the two ways of using language are by no means mutually exclusive. This becomes clear from the fact that our purposes are often complex. Stevenson says that when some one says 'I want you to close the door', part of his purpose, ordinarily, is to lead the hearer to believe that he has this want. Thus the expression is used descriptively to that extent. But, the major part of his purpose is to lead the hearer to satisfy the want and to that extent the sentence is used dynamically. Thus

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26. Facts and Values, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963), pp. 18-19.

the sentence is used to serve two purposes simultaneously. It is primarily used for a dynamic purpose and secondarily for a descriptive purpose. Moreover, the same sentence is usually used in order to perform two different kinds of functions in two different situations. In one circumstance the sentence is used descriptively while in another it is used dynamically.

Stevenson says that ethical judgments, also, perform both the descriptive and dynamic functions simultaneously. But, their distinctive feature is their dynamic function. He says that ethical judgments are used, primarily, 'not to indicate facts but to create an influence. Instead of merely describing people's interests they change or intensify them. They recommend an interest in an object rather than state that the interest already exists.'<sup>27</sup> Ethical judgments have a quasi-imperative force, which operates through suggestion and is intensified by the tone of voice, in influencing and modifying the interests of people.

Ethical terms as used in everyday language are vague. So they cannot be defined in any single way to the exclusion of all other definitions. Stevenson, therefore, presents two patterns for the analysis of ethical terms and does not insist on any one pattern of analysis to the exclusion of the other. But, he presents the general framework of both the patterns of analysis in the 'working models' and says that 'methods of

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27. Ibid., p. 16.

proving or supporting ethical judgments will be considered only to the extent that the working models suggest them.<sup>28</sup>

An ethical judgment, in accordance with the 'working models', is to be defined in a way in which the definition is a conjunction of two clauses; one of which is a declarative and the other an imperative. To illustrate, ethical judgment, 'this is good' is defined to mean 'I approve of this; do so as well'. Here the first clause of the definiens describes the attitude of the speaker and the second is an imperative, designed to change or intensify the attitude of the hearer.

The purpose of ethical discourse, unlike the purpose of scientific discourse, cannot be the proof or disproof of an ethical judgment, in Stevenson's scheme. For one of the clauses of the definiens of an ethical judgment is always an imperative, which does not make any truth-claim and as such cannot be proved to be true or false.

We have already seen that disagreement on ethical issues, according to him, is primarily rooted in disagreement in attitudes and not in belief. And, an essential characteristic of disagreement in attitude is that at least one of the contending parties has a motive to alter the attitude of the other. In a discourse, altering or redirecting of an attitude can be done by giving reason in support of one's point. So, he says, although ethical judgments cannot be proved or disproved like

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28. Ethics and Language, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1945, reprinted in 1958), p. 20.



scientific judgments, yet reason can be given in their support. This can be done by giving reason in support of the imperative aspect of the ethical judgment, 'do so as well'. This can be done in the same way in which other imperatives are backed up. For instance, the imperative 'close the door' can be supported by saying 'because it is drafty' or/and 'because the noise outside is distracting; similarly the imperative 'work harder than what you are doing' may be backed up by reason like 'if you don't, you will become an unhappy sort of dilettante'. These reasons function as proof in so far as they remove the doubts or hesitation which prevent the imperative from being accepted.

We have already seen that in his view the aim of an ethical argument is to terminate disagreement in attitude, and so it is required that the attitude of one party or the other or both be changed or redirected. He recognizes two methods of ending ethical disagreements. He calls the one 'rational method' and the other 'non-rational'. The characteristic of rational methods is that they proceed to change attitude via changes in beliefs. Besides rational methods there are other ways of altering a man's attitude that are not mediated by reasons which change beliefs. Beliefs form only one set among the many other determining factors which carve out attitudes. 'To the extent that the other factors are subject to control in the course of an argument, and so may contribute to changes in a man's attitudes, they both can



be and are used as a means of securing ethical agreement. Such procedures constitute the "non-rational methods" of ethics, ...<sup>29</sup>. Let us consider both the methods one by one, beginning with the rational methods.

In ethical argument, even when one uses a rational method to end disagreement, the relation between the reason, and the judgment which they support, is not logical, but only psychological. Stevenson clearly asserts that these reasons

... are related to the judgment psychologically rather than logically. They do not strictly imply the judgment in the way that axioms imply theorems; nor are they related to the judgment inductively, as statements describing observations are related to scientific laws. Rather they support the judgment in the way that reasons support imperatives.<sup>30</sup>

He accepts any statement as reason if the speaker thinks that the statement might affect attitudes. He says:

Any statement about any matter of fact which any speaker considers likely to alter attitudes may be adduced as a reason for or against an ethical judgment.<sup>31</sup>

The efficacy of these reasons depend whether the hearer believes them and whether they actually make a difference to the hearer's attitudes.

He admits that in some cases of ethical arguments the reasons may be logically related to the judgment they support or oppose. But such cases are rare and therefore form exceptions to his theory rather than a rule. In such arguments the

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29. Ibid., p. 139.

30. Ibid., p. 113.

31. Ibid., p. 114.

the disputants point out inconsistencies or contradictions in the statements of each other. Nevertheless, the purpose of these reasons is also to influence the hearer's attitudes and to secure agreement in attitudes rather than in belief, like the arguments where the reasons are psychologically related to the judgments they support. However, Stevenson says that 'in general, ethical statements, like all others that have at least some descriptive meaning, are amenable to the usual applications of formal logic.'<sup>32</sup> But he further says that even when ethical argument is amenable to formal logic, the dispute cannot be settled satisfactorily with the help of formal logic only. Even when a speaker makes ethical judgments which are formally contradictory and whose strict refutation is possible, logic only tells us that one of the two contradictory judgments should be given up; but it does not give us even the slightest hint as to which of the two judgments should be rejected. In ethical disputes, at times even consistent judgments may be rejected. For example, an analytic judgment may be rejected in an ethical discourse, either for its emotive repercussions or because of its being devoid of normative interest. In an ethical argument one can very well build up valid syllogisms with ethical statements, but here also the acceptance of the conclusion will depend on the acceptance of the premises, which will not be guaranteed by logic alone, unless they are contentless analytics. Hence,

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3. Ibid., p. 116.

Stevenson concludes that 'formal logic can provide necessary conditions to the rational acceptance of normatively interesting ethical judgments, but not sufficient ones.'<sup>33</sup>

Unlike some cases of ethical arguments which are amenable to formal logic, cases where the relation between reasons and the conclusion is psychological, the truth of the initial judgments is not questioned so long as they merely described the attitude of the speaker. In these arguments efforts are made to change attitude or to strengthen them by means of altering beliefs. So, inspite of the fact that the reasons used are factual in nature, and may be proved to be 'probable' or 'improbable' by scientific methods, yet the ethical judgment cannot be shown to be 'probable' or 'improbable' in the same sense. These reasons alter ethical judgments by altering attitudes as a consequence of bringing a change in beliefs. This is why no definite method of proof is possible in ethics.

Stevenson has illustrated in his chapter on 'First Pattern: Method' in 'Ethics and Language' that several kinds of reasons can be used in order to bring about a change in attitudes. One: In some cases of ethical disputes, one can bring about a change in attitude by clarifying the 'nature' of the object of judgment. This clarification of the 'nature' of the object can be done in two senses. In one sense the 'nature' of an object is given by means of factual, contingent, statements about the object itself. In another sense, it is given by statements

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33. Ibid., p. 135.

which, though they appear to be about the object, serve actually to define the term - the term which does not clearly or unambiguously designate any object until the definition is given.<sup>34</sup> But, irrespective of the sense of clarification of the nature of the object, it succeeds in changing the attitude of the object, it succeeds in changing the attitude of the opponent, if the person is predisposed to favour, or oppose anything of that nature.

Two: In some other cases, ethical disputes are brought to an end by pointing out the consequences of the object of judgment and thus affecting a change in the attitude of the opponent. But, such reasons only succeed when the person, whose attitude is changed has already a predisposition to favour or oppose the consequences in a manner acceptable to the person who has pointed them (consequences) out.

Three: In some ethical arguments a reason succeeds in altering a particular attitude of a person if the person's motive for taking the attitude is pointed out and questioned.

Four: Sometimes the attitudes of persons can be changed by pointing out the origin of their attitudes. Some attitudes are supposed to have supernatural sanction as they are thought to be either caused by God or the voice of conscience, and so people are afraid to change them. But a naturalistic explanation cuts through these fears and makes the attitudes more subject to the ordinary causes of change. Five: Attitudes can also be changed at times, and an agreement can be achieved in ethical disputes, by making an appeal to authority. But the force of the reason will depend on the hearer's respect for the

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authority in question.

Sometimes, in ethical discourse people are not so much interested in resolving the disagreement in attitudes as they are interested in evading temporarily the force of the opponent argument. This can be done by a counter attack on the speaker. But the success of a counter attack depends on whether the opponent is more anxious to escape humiliation than to persist in his influence.

Stevenson is conscious that there may be (and there are) many more sorts of reasons that may be successfully used in an ethical argument. He also points out that 'an ethical judgment is often supported by the systematic presentation of a whole body of beliefs, in which specific (factual) conclusions are subsumed under more general ones, and each conclusion is weighed with regard to its probability.'<sup>35</sup> And so, ethical reasoning need not be confined to terse, isolated, supporting statements, as Stevenson's examples in that chapter might lead one to think.

So far we have dealt only with Stevenson's method of resolving interpersonal ethical disputes, where rational methods are effective. Until now 'reasons have been taken as instruments whereby one person supports a view that he is recommending to another, or criticizes a view that the other is recommending to him.'<sup>36</sup> But, there are occasions when a person is faced

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<sup>35</sup>. Ibid., p. 129.

<sup>36</sup>. Ibid., p. 130.



with a problem, where he does not need to convince others or to deliberate with them but to convince himself. So, the method of reasoning by which people make up their own minds about what is good or bad, right or wrong requires careful attention.

In Stevenson's opinion there is not much difference in the intra-personal and interpersonal aspects of ethics. The need for a personal ethical decision arises from a conflict of attitudes. This happens when a person has more than one attitudes which are incompatible with each other. Hence, he says,

...the personal aspects of ethics are not very different from the interpersonal ones. The former involve conflict; the latter, when they are controversial, involve disagreement in attitude. Conflict and disagreement in attitude are much the same, since conflict occurs (to speak roughly but not ineptly) when an individual disagrees in attitude with himself. So the personal aspects of ethics reveal the same opposition with in individual that has previously been seen within a group.

... A reason which a man seeks for himself to change his attitudes, will not be greatly different from one that he uses in arguing with a friend.<sup>37</sup>

In his opinion there is so much of resemblance between the interpersonal and personal aspects of ethics that he thinks it redundant to discuss the personal aspect of ethics in detail. He, therefore, remains content to emphasize only the interpersonal aspects of ethics and treats the personal ones largely by implication.

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7. Ibid., p. 131.

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Besides the 'rational' methods, he recognises the role played by non-rational methods in resolving disagreement in attitudes which, in his view, are essential for the resolution of an ethical argument. In 'non-rational' methods resolution of disagreement in attitudes is not sought through resolution of disagreement in beliefs. In this sense the 'non-rational' methods are to be contrasted both from 'rational' and 'irrational' methods. Even 'irrational' methods are rational in the sense that they are 'reason-using' and 'are distinguished by the fact that the reasons themselves... are defended by invalid methods. But non-rational methods go beyond the use of reasons altogether - always provided, of course, that the term 'reason' is to designate statements that express beliefs.'<sup>38</sup>

The most important amongst the non-rational methods is the one called 'persuasive' by Stevenson. The other non-rational methods are: the material rewards and punishments, and various forms of the demonstration and display. Here 'method' is used in a broad sense.

The persuasive method, Stevenson says, depends on the sheer, direct emotional impact of words - on emotive meaning, rhetorical cadence, apt metaphors, stentorian, stimulating or pleading tones of voice, dramatic gestures, care in establishing rapport with the hearer or audience, and so on.'<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup>. Ibid., p. 140.

<sup>39</sup>. Ibid., p. 139.

legal? If not in this case, why in the case of ethical propositions? 41

Non-rational methods are undoubtedly used in ethical discussion for bringing a change in the attitude of the opponent, but as a methodologist it is the duty of Stevenson to evaluate its use and judge whether or not it is a proper, in the sense of permissible, method of securing agreement on moral matters. But Stevenson has no means to do it.

One assumption of Stevenson's theory of ethical reasoning is his belief that there are two distinct types of disagreements - disagreement in belief and disagreement in attitude. And since they differ in their nature there must also be a difference in the methods of ending those disagreements. Hence, while deductive and inductive methods of reasoning are used to end disagreement in belief, persuasive method is used to end the disagreements purely in attitude. However, we find that the nature of the two types of disagreements are not as different as he likes us to believe. Disagreement in belief, like disagreement in attitude arises not only when people disagree about relevant facts but also when they disagree about the criterion as to what is to be considered a relevant fact. In psychology the Behaviourist's and the Introspectionist's differ not only with regard to what are relevant facts but also with regard to the criterion of

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41. John Dewey, 'Ethical Subject-Matter and Language' (Published in The Journal of Philosophy, Vol. XLII-1945), pp. 709-10.

relevance. Here we find a situation which is not very different from the situation in ethics, where people not only disagree as to which actions are good or bad but also with regard to the criterion of goodness or badness.

The theories of ethical reasoning, advocated by Dewey and Stevenson, as presented above have many common points. Both, Dewey and Stevenson, as we have seen in the first chapter, believe that ethical judgments give information, but their distinguishing feature is their action-guiding function. Both of them believe that ethical judgments can be inferred from factual premises and the relation between the premises and the conclusion is not logical but factual. They also share the belief that ethical disagreements are generally rooted in disagreements in belief and so can be terminated by presenting more and more information to end the disagreement in belief. Thus Dewey's and Stevenson's theory of ethical argument turns out to be essentially the same, with the sole difference that Dewey does not approve of the use of non-rational method (as presented by Stevenson) in ethical discourse.

When compared with Moore's theory of ethical reasoning, I find, the theory advocated by Dewey and Stevenson in a better position to explain the nature of ethical arguments. We saw that Moore excludes judgments of intrinsic value from the scope of ethical arguments and says that there can be no

reasoning concerning them. But for Dewey and Stevenson there is no value judgment so sacrosanct that it is above the scope of rational inquiry and disputes. In Moore's theory one could argue only about the truth or falsity of instrumental value judgments or, in other words, about judgments concerning 'right' and 'ought'. But, in his theory even when arguing about the truth of such judgments it is essential that one of the premises must be a judgment of intrinsic value. But he fails to give us a satisfactory method of forming intrinsic value judgments. Hence his theory does not seem to be plausible.



## CHAPTER V

### VALUATION AND COGNITION

In the present chapter we will take up the problem of cognition of value, that is to say, how is value known? In a way this question has already been answered in the preceeding chapters, especially in the chapters on Moral Argument and Judgment of Intrinsic Value. Hence in this chapter we will develop the points which were scattered in those chapters and present them in a more systematic manner so that we get a clear picture as to how this question can be tackled.

#### Moore: Cognition by Inspection

Moore has not raised this problem at any one place. His answer to this question is scattered through out his Principia Ethica and other writings. We have already seen that his key value expression is 'good' and he does not consider all value judgments to be of the same kind. He, therefore, divides them into two broad types viz., judgments of intrinsic goodness and judgments of good as means. He also holds that these judgments fare not all arrived at in the same manner. According to him the way we judge the intrinsic goodness of a thing differs from the manner we judge the instrumental goodness of it. He also maintains that a

judgment of intrinsic value is involved in every judgment of instrumental value. We will, therefore, take up the question of the knowledge of intrinsic value first and then go on to see how instrumental value is cognised.

In the preface of Principia Ethica, writing about the judgment of intrinsic goodness, he says that the truth of these judgments cannot be adduced from any relevant evidence. Their truth cannot be inferred from the truth or falsity of any other judgments except themselves alone. He expresses this fact by calling such judgments 'Intuitions'. However, he immediately says that 'I am not an "Intuitionist", in the ordinary sense of the term.'<sup>1</sup> He explains this remark by saying that 'when I call such propositions "Intuitions" I mean merely to assert that they are incapable of proof; I imply nothing whatever as to the manner or origin of our cognition of them.'<sup>2</sup> Thus, even when he calls the judgments of intrinsic goodness 'Intuitions' he leaves us wondering as to how such propositions are known or cognised.

However he has not left us totally in the dark. He has dropped sufficient hints at places which give us an idea as to how goodness is cognised in his theory. If we put together his different remarks scattered in his writings we will get a clear idea as to how, according to him, propositions of intrinsic goodness are known.

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1. Principia Ethica (Cambridge: At the University Press, First paperback, 1959), p. X.

2. Ibid., p. X.

Arguing against the contention that 'good' means 'desiring to desire' he says that

...any one can easily convince himself by inspection that the predicate of this proposition - 'good' - is positively different from the notion of 'desiring to desire' which enters into its subject: 'That we should desire to desire A is good' is not merely equivalent to 'That A should be good is good.' <sup>3</sup>

We have already seen, in our first chapter, that according to Moore 'good' denotes a simple and indefinable quality. Now if we keep this in our mind, he seems to suggest, in the above quotation, that the quality of goodness is known in a manner analogous to visual perception. Here he seems to convey that 'good' and 'desiring to desire' are different notions and that they are not equivalent can be known by inspection in a way similar to the way the difference between a table and a chair can be known, by inspecting them.

This interpretation of his views gets support when we find him arguing against the theory that 'good' could be defined in terms of other notions like pleasure etc. Here he says that

...whoever will attentively consider with himself what is actually before his mind when he asks the question 'Is pleasure (or whatever it may be) after all good?' can easily satisfy himself that he is not merely wondering whether pleasure is pleasant. And if he will try this experiment with each suggested definition in succession, he may become expert enough to recognise that in every case he has before his mind a unique object, with regard to the connection of which with any other object, a distinct question may be asked.<sup>4</sup>

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3. Ibid., p. 16.

4. Ibid., p. 16.

Here, also, his use of the expression 'what is actually before his mind' and 'recognise' appears to suggest an analogy with recognising a thing which is before our vision or eye. This interpretation gets a further point in its favour, when Moore tries to explain to us the meaning of 'correspondence' in order to see whether or not it is like the meaning of 'truth'. He, therefore, asks us to hold before our minds the notion conveyed by the word 'correspondence' and explains to us what he wants us to do in this way. He says that

The essential point is to concentrate attention upon the relation itself: to hold it before your mind, in the sense in which when I name the colour 'vermilion', you can hold before your mind the colour that I mean.<sup>5</sup>

This comparison gives us a clear idea of what Moore means by the expression 'holding before one's mind'. When someone asks us to hold a colour before our mind, all that we understand him asking us to do is to look at a sort of mental photograph or colour chart. It is like keeping before our mind's eye an image-copy of what we once saw with our physical eyes. Keeping a colour before our mind is like 'mentally seeing' the colour. Moore at one place clearly says this when he compares holding a notion before the mind with directly, perceiving a sense-datum. To quote him:

And it seems to me that in this case we can perhaps distinguish the universal in question: that we can hold the number two before our minds, and see what it is, and that it is, in almost the same way as we

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5. G.E. Moore, Some Main Problems of Philosophy, (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1953, reprinted in 1962), p. 279.

can do this with any particular sense datum that we are directly perceiving.<sup>6</sup>

We can, therefore, conclude, with some certainty, from the above statements that in Moore's view one can know that a thing is intrinsically good in a manner analogous to knowing something through sense perception.

But, here, we find ourselves confronted with another difficulty. Whenever we directly perceive a sense-datum, it is perceived through some sense organ. But, which is the organ through which we directly know 'goodness'? Certainly, it is not known through any of our five sense organs viz., eye, ear, nose, tongue and touch (skin). For, everything that we know through these sense-organs are 'natural' in nature, whereas 'goodness' is 'non-natural', according to Moore. Like common intuitionists, he is not also prepared to accept 'intuition' as the special sixth source of knowledge in addition to our common five sense-organs. This is so because he clearly states that by calling the judgment of intrinsic goodness 'Intuitions' he implies nothing about the manner of their origin or cognition. Thus even when he suggests that we have a direct awareness of 'goodness' by inspecting it, in a manner analogous to our direct perception of sense-data, we are left wondering as to how the inspection is done. This problem becomes all the more intricate when we find him telling us that we cannot even keep the notion of 'correspondence', for

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6. Ibid., p. 346.



that matter any notion, before our mind 'If you are not acquainted with this relation in the same sort of way as you are acquainted with the colour 'vermilion', no amount of words will serve to explain what it is, any more than they could explain what vermilion is like to a man born blind.'<sup>7</sup>

Another point which adds to our difficulty in appreciating the manner of cognising good in this theory is Moore's contention that 'the object of imagination - what we imagine - is not identical with any image which we may be directly perceiving when we imagining; ... .'<sup>8</sup> If this is so, then what can we keep before our mind when we consider the question 'Is pleasure after all good' in our imagination?

Having discussed the method of knowing intrinsic goodness in Moore's theory, it is time that we proceed to find out the way in which according to him, one knows instrumental values.

We have already seen that according to him the judgments of right and the judgments of duty fall under the class of judgments of instrumental value. Hence we will take up the question as to how we know what is right and what is a duty.

Moore says that

...the word 'right' is very commonly appropriated to actions which lead to the attainment of what is good; which are regarded as means to the ideal and not as ends-in-themselves. This use of 'right' as denoting what is good as a means, whether or not it be also good as an end, is indeed the use to which I shall confine the word.<sup>9</sup>

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7. Ibid., p. 279.

8. Ibid., pp. 248-49.

9. Principia Ethica (Cambridge: At the University Press, First paperback, 1959), p. 18.

Thus we find that to judge an action to be right, according to him, is to judge two things at a time. It amounts to judging that the action in question causes another thing and that that thing is intrinsically good. What an action gives rise to is known by ordinary experience of every day life or by scientific inquiries. And when it is known what the action in question leads to, we judge whether or not the latter possesses intrinsic goodness.

He defines 'duty' 'as that action which will cause more good to exist in the universe than any possible alternative. And what is 'right' or 'morally permissible' only differs from this, as what will not cause less good than any possible alternative.'<sup>10</sup> Hence to judge that certain actions are our duty is to presume that to act in those ways will produce the greatest possible good. When one judges that to 'do no murder' is a duty, he presumes that the action called murder will under no circumstances cause so much good to exist in the universe as its avoidance will.

He says that if this view of duty be accepted then the theory that intuition is a mode of cognising our duty has to be rejected. It is no doubt true that we sometimes make immediate judgments that certain actions are obligatory or wrong, thus we are sometimes intuitively certain of our duties. But this certainty can be only in the psychological sense. Such

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10. Ibid., p. 148.

judgment are not self-evident, for they are capable of being confirmed or refuted by investigating their effects and calculating their goodness. It is possible that sometimes our immediate intuitions are true, but since, in these cases, what we intuit is that certain actions would always produce the greatest amount of goodness under the circumstances, it is obvious that we can always present reasons to show whether or not such intuitive judgments are true.

Another effect of accepting this notion of duty, according to Moore, is that in order to judge that a particular action is a duty, it is necessary that the person concerned must fulfil the following conditions: (1) He must know the other conditions which along with this action produce the effect. (2) He must know what exactly will be the effect of these conditions. (3) He should also know all those events which are likely to be affected by the action throughout the infinite future. Besides having this causal knowledge, (4) he must also know precisely the amount of goodness of the action in question and also of all these effects. (5) He should also be able to know how the action and these effects in conjunction with the other things in the universe will affect its goodness as an organic whole. Not only this, (6) he must also have all this information concerning the effects of all possible alternatives. And (7) he should also be able to see by comparison that the total goodness produced by the action in question will be greater than the goodness which would be produced by any of

these alternative actions. Now in the face of these requirements for judging that a particular action is our duty and finding that our knowledge of causal connections falls far short of these requirements, Moore concludes that we can never know with any certainty that a particular action is our duty.

However, Moore holds that although we cannot know our absolute duty, yet we can judge an action to be our duty in a particular situation in a restricted sense. In spite of the fact that we cannot hope to find out which of all the possible actions in a situation is likely to produce the maximum amount of goodness, yet we can hope to decide, with some probability, which among the possible course of actions, which occur to us in a situation, is likely to produce a greater degree of goodness than any of the alternative actions. He is aware that even this limited task is full of difficulties. We cannot give any definite proof that among these alternative actions, the one which we judge to be our duty, in the situation, will produce a greater amount of good than any of the other alternatives. The reason is that we can calculate with some certainty only the actual results of an action in the near future. It is improbable to judge that any one action will produce a better result than the others in the whole range of the infinite future. Hence all that we can hope in judging an action to be our duty in any particular situation is to achieve some probability and not certainty.

Here Moore has pointed out only the difficulties which arise out of our insufficient knowledge about causes and their effects. But I find some difficulty on another front also. In judging an action to be our duty we have to judge that the action in question will produce a greater degree of goodness than other alternatives. But as I have pointed out, in the third chapter, that in the absence of any single natural factor as the measure of goodness how can one calculate the goodness of the different effects of an action and judge that it is more or less than the goodness produced by the other courses of action. In the absence of any standard for the measurement of goodness, when one finds that Moore has not also given any alternative scheme of calculation of the goodness of different things, one is left wondering as to how one can judge that the value of one thing is greater than that of any other.

Besides these, Moore seems to be mistaken in his notion of duty. The way he defines 'duty' gives us the impression that people have some absolute duties irrespective of their roles in a society or moral system. But we do not actually judge our duties in the way he thinks we do. We never judge an action to be our duty, even in the restricted sense, by calculating and comparing the goodness likely to be produced by the different courses of actions which occur to us in any situation. Our duty, rather, arises out of our particular role in a particular society or system. We judge our duty in the light of our social position and the functions we perform and



are required to perform. While judging the merits of alternative courses of actions which occur to us at a time, we choose that course of action to be our duty which we think is in consonance with our role in the system and which is the best in the interest of the system. Here we do not think as to which of these alternative courses of actions is likely to bring into existence the maximum amount of goodness in the universe. Moreover, whenever we judge an action to be our duty we always judge so as a member of a society or a system and in virtue of our position in the system. We never judge any action to be our duty as an individual. Living in absolute isolation and thinking about goodness which we could bring into existence in the universe.

Moore uses 'good' in two senses. In one sense he uses it to denote a simple, indefinable and non-natural quality. This is the sense in which he generally uses it. But there is another sense in which he uses it, i.e., to denote the 'ideal' or the 'end' which some one wants to achieve. This sense of 'good' is clear from his statement when he says that 'the word "right" is very commonly appropriated to actions which lead to the attainment of what is good; which are regarded as a means to the idea and not as ends-in-themselves.'<sup>11</sup> But he fails to keep the two senses apart. It is due to this failure that, even after saying that the only difference between an action which is a duty and an action which is right is that the former will not produce less good than any possible alternative, he goes on to insist

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11. Ibid., p. 18.

among the possible courses of actions which occur to a person in any situation, that only that action is his duty which is likely to produce the maximum amount of goodness in the universe. But it is obvious that a man seldom aims at producing the maximum possible amount of goodness in the universe. Hence he should rather, have said that among the possible course of actions in a situation only that action is a duty which is the most effective means of achieving the ideal of the person concerned.

### Dewey: Cognition by Deliberation

On the question of the cognition of value, Dewey differs with the intuitionists who emphasise the non-discursive nature of ethics. He disagrees with those who play up its spontaneous and instinctive character and assign a subordinate role to intellect in the cognition of value. He differs with those thinkers also, who like Kant, have made the authority of duty supreme and marked off a unique faculty of reason and thought, called conscience, from the reason and thought which are used in our every day life, and considered it the source of all cognition of moral values. He finds even Plato unacceptable who, while accepting the identity of the Good with ends of desire, has made knowledge in the sense of insight into the ends, radically different from that which is concerned with the ordinary affairs of life. The reason is that such knowledge, as Plato holds, can be directly attained by only those few who are specially gifted with those few

peculiar qualities which help them to attain metaphysical understanding of the ultimate constitution of the universe. In such circumstances all the rest must accept the judgments of goodness given by such gifted persons or derive them from laws and institutions in which their experiences are embodied.

He rejects such theories of the cognition of moral values on yet another ground. Moral judgments, as we have seen earlier, are a species of value judgments. They speak of acts or traits of character as having value, either positive or negative. Value judgments are certainly not confined to the field of moral significance. We evaluate very many different things which we come across in our every day life. We judge the aesthetic worth of poems, stories and other literary compositions which we read or hear, as good or bad. We judge paintings, landscapes, natural scenes etc. as beautiful or ugly. We judge articles of furniture as useful, comfortable or otherwise. Not only this, whenever we pronounce judgments of calling things good or bad, we pronounce judgments of value. Hence a special faculty cannot be marked off as an esoteric source of knowledge of moral values. Besides this Dewey has taken great pains in his writings to show that moral values in objects and activities develop out of natural desire and normal social relations in family, neighbourhood and community. Hence he finds the theory, which holds that moral values are cognised through a special faculty, unconvincing.

Dewey's departure from the thinkers, who consider approval and resentment as the fundamental value factors and emphasise

their spontaneous and instinctive character, stems from his awareness that 'value' is used in two different senses, viz., pricing and appraising. Keeping in view the difference in the meaning of valuing and valuation is all the more important because direct valuing provides an opportunity of valuation. We esteem before we estimate. We estimate to find out whether and in what degree the object which we esteem is worthy of it. Hence in a valuation we always ask: does the object possess the qualities which justify our holding it dear? The attitude of direct valuing - instantly liking and disliking - changes into the attitude of valuation with maturity and experience. This explains how a person, who insists on the intuitive character of value judgments, is misled into holding the intuitive theory of the cognition of value.

One obvious mistake which the intuitionists commit in considering that a value judgment is instantly known is that they identify valuation with immediate valuing. An attitude of spontaneous valuing is absorbed in the object, person, act, or whatever there is and neglects its situation and consequences. It does not pay attention to its connections with other objects. Hence what is known in immediate apprehension is that which is already in existence. What we know is an accomplished fact and not value in its distinctive sense. The difference between direct valuing and valuation proper becomes clear when we pay attention to a common place experience. We eat a particular dish, instantaneously like it, but later, on experience, find



that it is not good for us.

The theory, which holds that value judgments are the results of immediate experience, also fails to explain as to why our immediate valuations change with further thought and considerations. When a person finds an unknown man inflicting pain and suffering on his ailing friend his immediate reaction is to throw the person out and save his friend from the suffering. But the moment he comes to know that the person inflicting pain is a physician his attitude changes and he realises that what the physician is doing is in the interest of his friend.

Probing in the immediate sense of value Dewey further exposes the weakness of the theory which believes in the intuitive character of value judgments. Direct valuing, he says, is not based on any thought out reason. 'Our immediate responses of approval and reprobation may well be termed intuitive.'<sup>12</sup> We are instantly attracted or repelled and so we just admire or resent. Such responses, although, primitive and original, persist even in acquired expertise and dispositions. An expert responds to an object in his field of expertise with such a quickness that it could be called intuitive rather than reflective. He points out:

An expert in real estate will, for example, "size up" pecuniary values of land and property with a promptness and exactness which are far beyond the capacity of a layman... . The results of prior experience, including previous conscious thinking, get taken up into direct

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12. Theory of Moral Life (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1960), p. 124.



habits, and express themselves in direct appraisals of value.<sup>13</sup>

He, therefore, says that although most of our moral judgments are immediate, yet this cannot be taken as a proof for the existence of a separate faculty of ethical insight. Rather, on the opposite, it shows that our past experiences, thoughts and reflections give rise to a direct habit and express themselves in immediate judgments.

The immediate character of value judgments get their reinforcement from the do's and donot's taught in childhood and youth. Children find themselves amongst people who are constantly passing value judgments. These judgments are usually passed in emotionally surcharged situations and not after cool considerations. Special efforts are made to stamp in such attitudes in children through praise and approbation and sometimes through the usual rewards and punishments. An attitude acquired, in such circumstances, by a child remains with him even when the circumstances change and he becomes an adult. Such an attitude becomes so much ingrained in the nature of a person that it appears to be innate and inevitable. This fact throws light on the intuitive nature of value judgments and also exposes the limitations of immediate valuing. Since immediate valuing are generally the results of the childhood ethical education, they bear the stamp of crude or enlightened value judgments of those persons who participated in the ethical education of the child.

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13. Ibid., pp. 124-25.

Besides this the effect of the early origin and deeply ingrained qualities of the attendant institutions is generally distorting and limiting. Usually it becomes nearly impossible for later thought and reasoning to correct and modify the attitudes which thus unconsciously become a part of the nature of the person. Dewey points out that in such a situation even the warped and distorted seems natural. This is why only 'the conventional and the fanatical are always immediately sure of right and wrong in conduct.'<sup>14</sup>

Dewey points out another important limitation of immediate valuation, even of the best of it; that its reliability depends on the degree of the resemblance of the situation and object of direct valuing with the valuing of objects in the past. It loses its reliability in cases which are new and do not resemble the objects and situations of past valuing. He draws our attention towards the adage 'New occasions teach new duties', and says that even the new occasions fail to teach those who believe that they can rely, without further thought and reflection on their evaluations of good and evil of the past and can bring them to bear on new occasions even. The unwillingness to take into consideration the new situation and the new elements of the objects of evaluation, exhibits their fear of having to modify their settled habits due to new insight - a process which is undoubtedly painful.

Finally, he points out that intuitions or immediate feeling of what is good and bad are of psychological importance and not

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14. Ibid., p. 126.

valuations. They indicate the psychological state of a person at a particular time or exhibit his disposition but provide no ground as to why a particular object or action should be favoured or disfavoured. They present at the most 'a presumption of correctness, and are guides, clues.'<sup>15</sup> But he goes on to add that 'nothing is more immediate and seemingly sure of itself than inveterate prejudice.'<sup>16</sup>

In spite of all these defects, Dewey appreciates the implicit emphasis on the direct responsiveness to qualities of situations and acts in the intuitional theory of valuation. He says that although a keen eye and a quick ear are not in themselves assurance of correct knowledge of physical objects, but they certainly are the preconditions of it. There can be no substitute for immediate sensitiveness. Unless there is an immediate prizing of objects or actions, no occasion for evaluation arise. A person must like or dislike a situation or action before he begins an appraisal of whether or not his attitude is justified. Not only this, if an evaluation has to be action-guiding, an effective deliberation must also end in a situation which is directly appreciated.' "cold blooded" thought may reach a correct conclusion, but if a person remains anti-pathetic or indifferent to the consideration presented to him in a rational way, they will not stir him to act in accord with them.'<sup>17</sup>

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15. Ibid., p. 126.

16. Ibid., p. 126.

17. Ibid., p. 128.

He says that in a valuation proper the direct valuing, which is the effect of an immediate sensitive response to acts or objects must be supplemented by thought and deliberation. Here the instant 'intuitions' of value have to be considered and modified in the light of the observation of the conditions and consequences of the object of valuation. This process of modification of immediate valuations, Dewey says, is called deliberation. In this process one thinks about practical matters in order to decide what to do.

In a moral deliberation we think about the worth of particular characters in order to decide which one to choose. It has the same nature as other deliberations. Moreover deliberation is not something peculiar to moral evaluations only. A general deliberates upon the course of his action at the time of war, weighing the possible moves of his enemy and of his own troops and considering their pros and cons; a physician deliberates upon the complaints of his patient and thinks about the effects of different medicines on him. In all deliberation the element of evaluation comes in as its purpose is to make up one's mind regarding the course of action which is to be chosen. A deliberation entails some doubt and hesitation and one has to make up one's mind, taking into account the pros and cons, regarding favouring the thing or action under consideration or not. But it is not identical with calculation or quasi-calculation of profit or loss.

In a deliberation we think of the implications of an immediate valuing of a thing or an action by looking for its effects. Thus, in a way, the effects of an object or action determine its value. But if we take into account only the distant effects, and if these effects fail to arouse present responses of liking or disliking, then our reflection becomes purely intellectual and fails to guide us in present action. A deliberation on practical matters stirs up the feelings of like or dislike, on thinking about every foreseen effect of the object under consideration. Dewey describes this process in the following way:

Deliberation is actually an imaginative rehearsal of various courses of conduct. We give way, in our mind, to some impulse; we try, in our mind, some plan. Following its career through various steps, we find ourselves in imagination in the presence of the consequences that would follow: and as we then like and approve, or dislike and disapprove, these consequences, we find the original impulse or plan good or bad. Deliberation is dramatic and active, not mathematical and impersonal; and hence it has the intuitive, the direct factor in it.<sup>18</sup>

Such imagination of different courses of actions provides opportunity for many impulses to come up in our attention, which in the beginning were not there. In this process various instant valuing take place. In such a situation it is more likely that the capability of a man of taking decision, which is so badly needed here, comes into action. This tendency of deliberation, says Dewey, is to polarize the different courses of actions into an incompatible alternative of 'either this or

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<sup>18</sup>. Ibid., p. 135.



that' and thus this method brings into light the value of the object or act concerned.

### Stevenson: Apprehension by Experience

Stevenson has not discussed the problem of the cognition of value. Perhaps he did not find it a problem, for he does not consider value to be a special kind of property as the intuitionists do. In his Ethics and Language, and in some of his other writings also, he has taken special pains to explain that the characteristic meaning of an ethical expression is emotive and not descriptive or cognitive. But he is careful enough to say that it does not mean that no part of its meaning is descriptive at all. He maintains, as we have seen, that any ethical judgment, when analysed, must have two parts - first, which is descriptive and the second, which is emotive or quasi-imperative.

The question of cognition concerns only the descriptive content of an ethical expression and not its emotive one. Hence this does not pose any problem for Stevenson. The attitude of the speaker towards the object of judgment at the time of judging is cognised by introspection, like any other psychological state of mind. And the qualities and/or relational properties of the object are known by sense experience and thought.

The question 'how do we know value?' presupposes that value is a special kind of property differing from other properties in nature, which we know through our sense organs or experience. Since Moore holds the view that 'good' denotes a

property which is simple, indefinable and non-natural in nature, this question seemed to be quite important to him and posed itself as a problem. He, therefore tried hard to explain how this non-natural property was known, and came out with a proposal that it was known through inspection. But since he held that goodness was a non-natural property he could not say that this inspection was done through normal sense-experience. Consequently, he tried to explain that this inspection could be done without the use of sense organs and, as we saw, miserably failed in this effort.

In our first chapter while looking for the feature which distinguishes a value expression from a descriptive one we examined and rejected Moore's method of denotational analysis, which misled him to think that since 'good' was predicated of so many different kinds of things and actions, all the things or actions which were called good must be having a property in common, the property which was denoted by 'good'. There we came to conclude that although value expressions give some information, yet their distinctive feature is not this descriptive function rather it is their action-guiding function. Since the action-guiding function is not descriptive or cognitive in nature, when the question 'how do we know value?' is raised it cannot be taken to be about this aspect of value expressions. This question, therefore, can be about the descriptive aspect of the functions of value expression. But as we saw in this function value-expressions do not, in any way, differ from other descriptive expressions.

expressions. Both value and descriptive expressions give information about the same kind of facts or objects or qualities. Hence when we find Dewey and Stevenson not taking this question of cognition of value as a problem and maintaining that values are known in the same way as other things or properties are known, i.e., through sense experience and thought, we feel that they are nearer the truth than the intuitionists are.

## CHAPTER VI

### VALUE AND OBLIGATION

After having discussed the nature of judgments of intrinsic value and also the question as to how value is cognised, we have reached a stage when we concern ourselves with the question, can value terms be explained by means of obligation terms or vice-versa?

#### Moore: 'Obligation Definable in Terms of 'Value'

Moore has taken up this question in all seriousness and has tried to answer it both in his Principia Ethica and Ethics. Right in the preface of the Principia he distinguishes two questions which, in his opinion, moral philosophers have always professed to answer but have almost always confused both with one another and with other questions. He puts the first of these questions in the form 'what kind of things ought to exist for their own sakes?' and the second 'what kind of actions ought we to perform?' He says that the answer to the first question gives us judgments of intrinsic value, whereas the answer to the second gives us judgments of ought, duty, obligation or right.

He uses 'good', as we have already seen, as the key value expression. In spite of his awareness of the various senses in which 'good' is generally used, he has picked up one of its

senses and has tried to use it in that very sense through out his ethical writings. He admits that he might have made the mistake of confusing this particular sense of 'good' with some of its other senses, yet he insists that there is only one sense, in the main, in which he has used it. This is the sense which he expresses by the term 'intrinsically good'. To put it in his own words:

I think it is true that, among the many different senses in which the word 'good' is used, there is one particular sense which is the sense which I have been mainly concerned to talk about in my ethical writings. Perhaps I may sometimes have confused this sense with other closely allied senses. But I think it is true that, in the main, there is just one sense with which I have been principally concerned. I have often used the expression 'intrinsically good' as a synonym for 'good', when used in this particular sense, and I have also sometimes used the expression 'has intrinsic value' as a synonym for 'is good', when 'good' is used in this particular sense.<sup>1</sup>

He has tried to explain, in many different ways, the sense of 'good' with which he is mainly concerned and admits that his explanation in the paper 'Is Goodness a Quality' is positively wrong. He maintained there that the particular sense of 'good' with which he was concerned was one in which 'is good' meant 'is an experience which is worth having for its own sake'. But this, he now says, is a mistake, since the sense in which he wants to use 'good' is such that

to say of a state of things in which two or more people were all having experiences worth having for their own sake that it was 'good' in the sense in question would not be self contradictory, where as to say of such a state of things that it was itself an experience worth

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1. P.A.Schilpp (ed.) The Philosophy of G.E.Moore, (Evanston and Chicago: Northwestern University, 1942), p. 554.



having<sub>2</sub> for its own sake would be self-contradictory.<sup>2</sup>

However it is correct to say, in his opinion, that any experience which is worth having for its own sake must be 'good' in the sense in which he uses 'good', but it is certainly a mistake to assert its converse.

Moore begins his Principia Ethica by clearly maintaining a distinction between the notion of intrinsic value and the notion of what we ought to do. This is clear from his insistence on the distinction between the two questions mentioned earlier. But we notice that he is attaching a notion of obligatoriness to the notion of intrinsic goodness and is treating the good as somehow having some action-guiding significance. This becomes clear from him using 'good' as a synonym of 'ought' to exist for its own sake' and 'good as end'. This becomes almost certain when we find him defining 'right' and 'duty' as 'cause of good result',<sup>3</sup> and 'that action which will cause more good to exist in the Universe than any possible alternative',<sup>4</sup> respectively.

But my difficulty begins when I try to correlate this contention of his with the other things which he asserts about the notion of goodness. We all know that, according to him 'good' denotes 'a simple and indefinable quality.'<sup>5</sup> But if 'good' denotes a quality, in his sense, how can it have an action-guiding significance? To say that 'X is good', in his scheme, means that X

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2. Ibid., p. 555.

3. Principia Ethica (Cambridge: At the University Press, First paperback, 1959), p. 147.

4. Ibid., p. 148.

5. Ibid., p. 10.

possesses the quality goodness which is denoted by the expression 'good'. In this case how can the quality good have an action-guiding significance?, and how can the judgment 'X is good' imply that X ought to be brought into existence or its existence ought to be perpetuated? Here someone may say, on behalf of Moore, that since goodness is not a natural quality but a non-natural one, it does not only tell us what is the case but also what to do. However we find nothing in the explanation, which he has given to explain what he means by 'non-natural' to support such defence.

Moore has made three attempts to explain the distinction between 'natural' and 'non-natural'. Out of these, two are found in Principia Ethica and one in his essay 'The conception of Intrinsic Value', although he has not used the word 'natural' and 'non-natural' there. In the first place he says that a property or a thing which can be imagined 'as existing by itself in time'<sup>6</sup> is natural otherwise non-natural. According to this criterion, a quality which cannot be imagined to exist in time by itself is a non-natural quality. Thus from the non-naturalness of a quality what follows is that the quality is incapable of existing in time by itself (as a matter of fact no quality can exist in time by itself) and nothing more. Hence by saying that goodness is a non-natural quality, Moore cannot claim that it is action guiding in nature.

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6. Ibid., p. 41.

Another suggestion about the criterion of distinguishing a natural quality from a non-natural one is given in Moore's statement about goodness that 'it is not, in fact, like most of the predicates which we ascribe to things, a part of the thing to which we ascribe it.'<sup>7</sup> Here he seems to maintain that the natural qualities of a thing are parts of which it is made up and not merely predicates which are attached to it, whereas non-natural qualities do not form parts of the object to which they are attached. Now even if we accept this criterion we only learn that a non-natural quality does not form a part of the object to which it is attached and not that it is action-guiding in significance.

In his paper 'The Conception of Intrinsic Value', Moore presents another criterion. He translates it into the language of Principia and puts it as follows: 'natural intrinsic properties seem to describe the intrinsic nature of what possesses them in a sense, in which predicates of value never do.'<sup>8</sup> He elaborates this point by saying that

This was a suggestion that there is a sense of the word 'describe' - one of the senses in which that word is ordinarily used - such that, in describing to a thing a property which is not natural intrinsic property, you are not describing it at all whereas, if you ascribe to a thing a natural intrinsic property, you always are describing it to some extent, though of course the description may be very vague and very far from complete.<sup>9</sup>

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7. Ibid., p. 124.

8. A Reply to My Critics' in The Philosophy of G.E. Moore, edited by P.A. Schilpp (Evanston and Chicago: Northwestern University, 1942), p. 590.

9. Ibid., p. 590

He accepts that this distinction between the two types of qualities remains extremely vague, as long as the particular sense of 'describe' which is relevant here, is not ascertained. But he further admits, in 'A Reply to My Critics', that he is not able to ascertain the particular sense of 'describe' which is in question. He clearly says 'I am no more able to do this now than I was then.'<sup>10</sup>

Hence for a person who wants to assert that 'good' has an action-guiding significance, on the ground that it is a non-natural quality, it becomes essential to ascertain the particular sense of 'describe' in which non-natural qualities do not describe, and show that its lack of the ability to 'describe' in the sense in question, implies that it has action-guiding significance. But unless it is done one cannot legitimately infer that good must have action guiding significance from the fact that 'good' does not 'describe' in one particular sense of the many senses in which it is used.

Moore uses 'intrinsically good' as a synonym of 'ought to exist for its own sake'. But he does not seem to be justified in using these expressions as interchangeable. The reason is as W.K. Frankena has pointed out, that

the notion of what ought to exist for its own sake has a complexity which the notion of intrinsic value is not supposed to have. It involves the notions of obligation and of existence and of a kind of relation of the things

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10. Ibid., p. 91



in question to existence, and can hardly represent a simple quality.<sup>11</sup>

The statement 'X ought to exist' seems to imply that someone has a duty to bring X into existence. If this sense of 'ought to exist' is accepted then it cannot be used as a synonym of 'intrinsically good' which denotes a simple quality. Moreover, since 'good' denotes (in the sense in which Moore uses this expression) a quality, which is common in all good things, it cannot possess any action-guiding significance. But the expression 'ought to exist' certainly has this significance. Hence Moore's attempt to equate these two expressions fails utterly.

Moore, as we have already seen, defines duty or obligation in terms of goodness. He holds that the assertion "I am morally bound to perform this action" is identical with the assertion "this action will produce the greatest possible amount of good in the Universe".<sup>12</sup> He, therefore, maintains that whenever we assert of a particular action that it is our duty we assert that 'the performance of that action at that time is unique in respect of value'. The action which is judged to be a duty cannot be unique in the sense that that is the only thing having value in the universe or having the greatest amount of value in the universe, for in this case every action which is judged to be a duty will become the sole thing having value or having the greatest amount of value in the universe, which

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11. 'Obligation and Value in The Ethics of G.E. Moore' in The Philosophy of G.E. Moore (Evanston and Chicago: Northwestern University, 1942), pp. 98-99.

12. Principia Ethica (Cambridge: At the University Press, First paperback, 1959), p. 147.



is a clear contradiction. It could be unique, therefore, only in the sense that 'the whole world will be better if it be performed, than if any possible alternative were taken',<sup>13</sup>. Hence he defines 'duty' 'as that action which will cause more good to exist in the universe than any possible alternative'.<sup>14</sup>

Here, in the definitions of 'duty' we find three kinds of information. One, causal information as to what the action in question gives rise to; two, a judgment of value - the effect of the action is good, and three, a comparative account of value - the effect of this action increases the amount of goodness more than the effect of any other alternative course of action could have done. But this analysis of the definition shows that the definiens is not equivalent in significance to its definiendum. Duty 'has an action guiding significance. To say that 'X is a duty ' amounts to saying that 'X ought to be done'. But to say that 'X causes more amount of good to exist in the universe than any possible alternative' has no such action guiding significance, if good is used in Moore's sense. This statement simply gives some information about X. But no amount of information of any kind can move a person into action in any way unless it has some connection with the wants or desires of the person. In Moore's definition of duty we do not find any information regarding such a connection. Even

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13. Ibid., p. 147.

14. Ibid., p. 148.

the judgment that something is good has no action guiding significance in Moore's theory, as such a judgment only states that the thing in question possesses some non-natural quality which is denoted by the word 'good'. Thus Moore's effort to define 'duty' or 'obligation' in terms of good does not seem to succeed.

Moore's definition of 'duty' lays down such conditions for judging an action to be one's duty as to make it impracticable in life. He himself admits that 'universal propositions of which duty is predicate, so far from being self-evident, always require a proof, which it is beyond our present means of knowledge ever to give'.<sup>15</sup> I would venture to go a step further and say that in the present state of our causal informations one cannot even give reasons to support one's judgment that a particular action is his duty. For, according to his definition of duty, to judge an action to be one's duty one must know all the conditions along with which the action in question can produce its effect. One must also know the effects which these conditions will produce. Besides these one must also know all the events which are likely to be affected in any way by the action throughout the infinite future. To decide that the action is one's duty one must have all this causal information about the action in question and also about all its possible alternatives. One must further know the degree of value both of the action itself and its alternatives and of all their

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15. *Ibid.*, p. 181.

effects. One must also be able to judge as to how these effects along with other things are going to affect the value of the universe as an organic whole. But these seem to be demands which are impossible to fulfil in the present state of our knowledge. However, in spite of these difficulties which one faces in judging an action to be one's duty in Moore scheme, we find people, in our every day life, judging with some certainty whether or not a particular action is a duty. This fact casts doubt on the correctness of Moore's definition of 'duty'.

Having seen that Moore's effort to define obligation expressions in terms of 'good' fails, we may explore the possibility of whether or not he can define 'good' in terms of obligation expressions. However, we find this possibility rejected by Moore as 'good' is a simple and indefinable notion. But some thinkers have not been discouraged by Moore's proclamation that 'good' is indefinable and have found out statements in Moore's writings which they seem to think, can be taken as a definition of 'good'. W.K. Frankena, in his paper 'Obligation and Value in the Ethics of G.E. Moore', maintains that in Moore's ethics 'good' can be defined in terms of obligation. He puts forward an equivalence asserted by Moore in Ethics:

To say of anything, A, that it is 'intrinsically good', is equivalent to saying that if we had to choose between an action of which A would be the sole or total effect, and an action, which would have absolutely no effects at all, it would always be our duty to choose the former, and wrong to choose the latter.<sup>16</sup>

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16. Ethics (Geoffrey Cumberlege: Oxford University Press, 1912, reprinted in 1952), p. 42.

He then asks why this statement cannot be called a definition. He says that Moore is not certain that this is not a definition of 'intrinsically good' in terms of 'duty'. Moore's only argument against treating this statement as a definition is that it is not a tautology to say that it is always our duty to do what will have the best possible consequences. But this argument against taking the statement as a definition, says Frankena, is not conclusive. He says that simply the fact that a statement seems to be significant does not prove that it is not analytic. A statement may seem significant to us due to our confusion or due to our different emotive associations with the meanings of its words. So, if the seeming significance of the statement in question cannot be taken to show that it is not analytic, then Moore seems to have no ground, in his opinion, for rejecting this statement as a definition of 'intrinsically good'.

Moore in his 'A Reply to My Critics' in The Philosophy of G.E. Moore takes up this point and says that though he cannot give a conclusive reason for rejecting the above statement as a definition of 'intrinsically good' he can give good reasons for it. He says that the test, whether or not a statement is a definition is besides the mutual entailment of the definiendum and the definiens to ask oneself the question, 'can I think of the definiendum without ipso facto thinking of the definiens? Now on this test the above statement cannot be called a definition. Moore further says that the statement in question fails to express



what he wanted to say when he wrote those lines. He expresses the ideas as follows:

To say of anything, A, that it is 'intrinsically' good is equivalent to saying that, if any agent were a creator before the existence of any world, whose power was so limited that the only alternative in his power were those of (1) creating a world which consisted solely of A or (2) causing it to be the case that there should never be any world at all, then, if he knew for certain that this was the only choice open to him and knew exactly what A would be like, it would be his duty to choose alternative (1), provided only he was not convinced that it would be wrong for him to choose that alternative.<sup>17</sup>

Moore says that even this statement cannot be a definition as we can think of the definiendum without thinking of the definiens.

Moore rejects another proposed definition of 'good' in terms of 'obligation' by Frankena in the same paper on account of its failing to come up to his criterion. We have, therefore, to conclude that 'good' in Moore's scheme cannot be defined in terms of 'duty' or 'obligation' as some have suggested.

Dewey: 'Obligation' a Distinct Concept, Yet Related With the Concept of 'Value'

Dewey has not taken up the problem of defining one moral concept in terms of another. But he has in a way discussed which one of the two concepts - value and obligation - is more fundamental and whether or not they are related with each other. His contention seems to be that although 'right' and 'duty' are distinct concepts, they cannot be separated from 'the ends and

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17. The Philosophy of G.E. Moore, edited by P.A. Schilpp, (Evanston and Chicago: Northwestern University, 1942), p.600.



values which spring from those desires and affections that belong inherently to human nature.'<sup>18</sup>

He is in agreement with those thinkers who maintain that the right is a means to the good. But he does not accept it as a definition of 'right'. He, however, says that 'it is certainly desirable that acts which are deemed right should in fact be contributory to good.'<sup>19</sup> Explaining why he does not accept that the right is a means to the good' as a definition of 'right' he points out that the concept of 'rightness' is, in many cases, independent of the concept of satisfaction and good. Besides this, the concept of 'rightness' has an element which the concept of 'goodness' does not have. This element he says, 'is that of exaction, demand.'<sup>20</sup> Hence, if right has to be defined in terms of 'value', the idea of what is reasonable must also have the idea of authoritative claim so that the good may be converted into the right. But the idea of the good certainly makes no such authoritative demand.

He is also apposed to those thinkers who, like Kant, separate 'right' and 'duty' completely from the concept of 'good', in the moral sense, and treat the concept of 'duty' as fundamental and the concept of 'good' as secondary. These thinkers hold that 'the concept of good and evil must not be determined before the moral law, but only after it and by means of it.' He exposes

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18. John Dewey, Theory of the Moral Life (New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston, 1960), p. 68.

19. Ibid., p. 66

20. Ibid., pp. 66-67.

the weakness of this view by examining the theory of Kant in some detail.

Kant conceives the idea of 'right' and 'duty' without any reference to the natural inclinations and desires of human beings. But he does it by splitting man into two disconnected faculties - one, which prescribes laws of right and duty and the other which gives rise to human passions and desires. Such a division of man, Dewey points out, does not get any support from modern psychology; rather findings of psychology go to prove the untenability of such a division.

Kant holds that an action can be judged good only on the basis of its motive. The justifying reason of any conduct, in his view, is its motive, which must be reverence for the law or duty. This law, in his theory is a command which is absolute and unconditioned. The moral command, according to him, says that one must act from the motive of duty, no matter whatever be the situation. Thus in the evaluation of any conduct as good (or bad) its consequences have nothing to do. Kant is so fussy on this point that according to him, if a mother cares for her child out of her natural inclination, then her conduct would not be good; but if her motive in caring for him is the reverence for the moral law which makes it her bounden duty, then alone her conduct can be called good.

Dewey, here, points out a difficulty which is inherent in all theories which separate the concepts of 'right' and 'duty'

from that of 'good'. He asks:

When all regard for consequences and for all ends which desire sets before us is excluded, what concrete material is left to be included within the idea of duty? Why may not a man go ahead in any line of conduct provided he is persuaded that his duty lies there? ...Putting the question in its precise form, how shall a man go from the idea of duty in general to that of some particular act or mode of conduct as dutiful? <sup>21</sup>

Kant recognizes the difficulty and admits that the law of duty, in itself, is formal and empty. He, however, says that we have no difficulty in judging whether or not a particular act is our duty, since the consciousness of duty is imposed upon us by our rational faculty, and the essence of Reason is to express itself in universal and necessary terms. Hence, the only thing required in judging whether or not a particular act is a duty is to ask ourselves if the motive of the action can be made universal without being self-contradictory. He illustrates this point with the help of a case of making a promise with the intention of not keeping it. He says that this action cannot be a duty, for the motive behind it cannot be made universal. When it is made universal, it breaks the institution of promise-making, as no one would have faith in the proffered intention, and thus shows that the principle of promise breaking is no principle at all. He presents the standard of right action in the form of a formula: 'Act as if the maxim of thy action were to become by thy will a universal law of nature.'

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21. Ibid., pp. 72-73.

This method of deciding whether or not a particular act is a duty, Dewey submits, instead of excluding all references to consequences, prescribes a way of securing impartial and general consideration of consequences. It does not in effect, tell us to neglect the consequences of the action in question and to do it because our rational faculty commands it. It rather requires us to value the consequences of doing the action in their widest possible significance. Dewey, therefore, holds that 'in reality, although not in formal theory, Kant's universality signifies regard for social consequences instead of disregard of all consequences...'<sup>22</sup>

In Kant's opinion the moral or rational will is an end in itself, and is not a means to something else. This implies, Dewey points out, that every man is equally an end in himself. For it is the rational will which distinguishes man from other things. We use things as means. So when we use a man as a means to our end, we encroach upon his very being as a person and reduce him to the status of merely a thing. Hence Kant prescribes a second law in the following form: 'So act as to treat humanity, whether in thine own person or in that of any other, as an end, never as a means only.' A person who makes a promise to another with the intention of not keeping it, uses the other person as a means for his own profit and so violates his very being. Now, since all men are persons having rational will and having equal claim upon the conduct of all other men, our

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22. Ibid., p. 75.

rather come to him as an expression of a system of which he himself is a part. This explanation of the origin of obligations becomes all the more clear when we find parents under obligation to their children, although the latter do not voice their claim. The parents, who are conscientious, realize their obligation because they are involved in the parental relationship. It is because of sociological relationships that parents and children have rights and obligations. Dewey generalizes these instances and concludes that 'Right', law, duty, arise from the relations which human beings intimately sustain to one another, and that their authoritative force springs from the very nature of the relation that binds people together.<sup>23</sup>

The conclusion of Dewey carries more conviction when we realize that people do not have rights or obligations as isolated individuals but as members of an association or a group. Right and duty arise because individuals are interdependent. No one is born independent of all others. No one can survive but for the aid and care from others. The material for his physical and intellectual subsistence comes from others. No doubt as one matures he becomes more and more independent. But his dependence on others never ends. For, even when he is alone he thinks in terms of language which he learns from others and contemplates on problems which arise in the course of interaction with other people. A person no doubt is an individual but his individuality

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23. Ibid., pp. 69-70.



has meaning only in the context of his relations with others. 'Otherwise, he is an individual only as a stick of wood is namely, as spatially and numerically separate.'<sup>24</sup>

This theory about the origin of obligation gets support from the fact that the Romans spoke of duties as offices. An office, Dewey says, has a representative value. No body can have 'office' in absolute isolation from all others, or in his purely individual capacity. It is as a parent that an individual imposes duties on his children, or has obligations towards them. Parents cannot impose duties on their children or have obligation towards them as completely isolated individuals, nor out of their personal idiosyncrasies. They impose duties on their children or have obligations towards them as representatives of a relationship., which they all share.

Dewey is aware of the fact that in spite of the natural character of the ideas of 'right' and 'duty' and their inevitable role in society, a law of right or duty may degenerate, and actually it sometimes does, into the means of the aggrandisement of the persons in authority. Not only this, particular principles of right and duty may conflict with an individual's judgment of his end and good. He, therefore, says that although right and duty in general have independent statuses 'because of the social claims which attend human relations, any particular claim is open to examination and criticism.'<sup>25</sup>

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24. Ibid., p. 80.

25. Ibid., p. 82.

Dewey points out that right and duty in general have their independent statuses because the persons upon whom duty is imposed themselves lay claims upon others. It is a common fact that people expect benefits from others. Since they have their own ends and values which they want to achieve, they hold others to their duties which they owe them. Dewey takes the clue from this fact to judge whether or not a particular claim is justified. He says that in the cases of doubt about the propriety of particular claims one has simply to see if he himself makes that sort of claim on other. Does it produce the consequence which he himself prizes? If the answers of the two queries are in the affirmative then in so far one is fair-minded, he must accept that the claim is binding upon his action and judgment and is for the common good. He, therefore, states the criterion of deciding whether a particular obligation is justified in the following form:

Does the conduct alleged to be obligatory, alleged to have authority of moral law behind it, actually contribute to a good in which the one from whom an act is demanded will share?

Dewey seems to be correct in rejecting the view that 'right' and 'duty' can be defined in terms of 'good', as Moore thinks, on the one hand, and the views like the one held by Kant that idea of 'good' cannot be formed without reference to the 'duty'.

## CONCLUSION

In the first chapter I examined and rejected Moore's method of denotational analysis for explaining the difference between descriptive and evaluative expressions. On further discussion, I found that evaluative expressions perform two functions - cognitive and action-guiding. But the cognitive function of evaluative expressions differs from context to context. Besides this, they share this function with descriptive expressions. Hence the cognitive function of evaluative expressions cannot be taken as the feature which distinguishes them from descriptive ones. On the other hand, the action-guiding function of evaluative expressions is peculiarly their own, as no descriptive expressions perform this function. Unlike the cognitive function, the action-guiding function of evaluative expressions remains unchanged, no matter what the contexts of their use. I, therefore, concluded that it was this function which an evaluative expression is mainly used to perform. I also found that since the cognitive function is common to both descriptive and evaluative expressions, it cannot be used as a basis for explaining the difference in the logical behaviours of the two kinds of expressions. Hence, I further concluded that the difference between the logical behaviours of descriptive and evaluative expressions could also be explained on the basis of the

action-guiding function of evaluative expressions.

In the second chapter I found that moral and non-moral judgments do not differ in their behaviour on the logical plane. The reason for this is that both these kinds of judgments perform two kinds of functions, viz., cognitive and action-guiding. Hence both the classes of judgments could be questioned or supported in the same ways. This means that the same logical apparatus could be used to explain the use of value-expressions in both moral and non-moral contexts. There I have rejected the thesis of Dewey that moral and non-moral values differ in kind. I have also refused to accept Stevenson's view of distinguishing moral evaluations from non-moral ones on the basis of the feelings and attitudes of the evaluators and their listeners. His submission is that there are some 'peculiarly moral' feelings and attitudes, which always accompany moral evaluations and are never found to accompany non-moral evaluations. I rejected this view on the ground that feelings and emotions keep on changing very swiftly and if one accepted it one will have to keep on changing the label of 'moral' to 'non-moral' and vice-versa in accordance with the change in the accompanying feelings. I concluded, along with Hare, that whenever there is a moral evaluation, one directly or indirectly commends people. So a distinction could be maintained between a moral and non-moral evaluation on the basis of the object of evaluation. A valuation is moral if its object of evaluation is human character, otherwise it is non-moral.

In the third chapter my conclusion was that the division between intrinsic and instrumental value is not absolute. For, there is no difference in the nature of these two kinds of values. The distinction simply exhibits the point of view of the evaluator at the time of evaluation. If an evaluator prizes an object at a particular time without thinking of its consequences, then his judgment about the value of that object at that time is about its intrinsic value. But when he passes a more considered judgment regarding the value of an object, taking into consideration the consequences which are likely to come up, the resultant judgment is a judgment of instrumental value.

In the fourth chapter I rejected the deductive approach to moral reasoning as advocated by Moore. Further, I did not agree with him that there is a class of moral judgments so sacrosanct that there cannot be any argument concerning them. I came to conclude with Dewey and Stevenson that moral arguments are neither deductive nor inductive in nature, but form a separate class of their own. I further agreed with them that ethical disagreements are usually rooted in disagreements in belief and so can be terminated by presenting more and more of information. However, I find that the relation between the premises and the conclusion in an ethical argument is not logical, but psychological. The reason is that the aim of moral discourse, unlike that of scientific discourse is not to arrive at a truth but to seek the agreement of the opposing party. Here the aim of the discourse



cannot be to seek truth, as the distinctive feature of value expressions is not their cognitive but their action-guiding function. Since the action-guiding function does not involve the question of truth and falsity, so too moral disputes do not begin with difference in beliefs but in the attitudes of the contending parties. They arise in living contexts, hence the effectiveness of reasons used in a dispute is relative to the context of the dispute. With a change in the context of the dispute, the reasons which were once effective in supporting a moral judgment may become ineffective and other reasons may be needed.

The fifth chapter is concerned with the problem of cognition of value. Here I show that this problem pre-supposes a particular theory of value. This question has a significance only in the context of a theory which holds that value is a special type of property or thing which is very different from other types of properties or things.

Since Moore holds a theory that 'good' denotes a simple property which is non-natural in nature, the question of cognising this property poses a problem to him. He comes out with the answer that it is known by inspection. But, since he holds that the denotata of 'good' is non-natural in nature, he does not accept that the inspection is done by sense organs. But he miserably fails in his effort to explain how then inspection works. In the first chapter I rejected Moore's contention that 'good' denotes a property and pointed out, that the function of 'good' is not to

denote a property in Moore's sense but to do something else. I found that although one of the functions of 'good' is to give information, its distinctive feature is not descriptive but action-guiding. Since the action-guiding function is not cognitive in nature, the question regarding its cognition cannot be raised. Hence I concluded that when the question- how value is known?- is raised it concerns the cognitive aspect of value discourse. But, as I found that in this function value expressions are like descriptive ones, as both give information of the same type, I came to conclude that values are known in the same way as other things or properties are known.

The sixth chapter deals with the problem of finding out whether value-expressions can be explained in terms of obligation expressions or vice-versa. Here, I rejected the attempt of Moore to define 'right' and 'duty' in terms of 'good'. I, here, concluded, on the other hand, that all such attempts are bound to fail as obligation-expressions have a sense of compulsion and demand which value-expressions like 'good' do not have. I also rejected along with Dewey the attempt of Kant to separate the notion of 'right' and 'duty' completely from that of 'good' or 'value'. Here, I pointed out that no particular law of right or duty can have any content unless it has some reference to what people consider good, independently of these laws. Here I found myself more in agreement with Dewey than with any one else, when he says that the concepts of 'right' and 'duty' are distinct but not separate from that of 'the good'.

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